CRITICAL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF BOOKS AND IDEAS

Volume 2 Number 1 $4.75

HAYEK IN POLAND — Andrzej Walicki on Polish liberalism

HABERMAS — Jeremy Shearmur

THE VIEW FROM NOWHERE — John Hospers

THE EVIDENCE OF THE SENSES — Peter Munz

EVOLUTIONARY EPISTEMOLOGY — Anthony O'Hear, I. C. Jarvie

CULTURAL EVOLUTION — Lee Cronk, David Ramsay Steele

PLUS *Liberalism in Search of Its Self: An Exchange*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

VOL. 1, NO. 1 WINTER 1987

Why *Critical Review*? *K. Schuler*
Political & Economic Illusions of Socialism *D. Lavoie*
Coming to Grips with Marx *M. Mueller*
Is Rivalry Rational? *T. Bottomore*
The Case of Eastern Europe *P. Rutland*
Popper's Critique of Marxism *J. Shearmur*
Making Sense of Hayek *D. Clouatre*
Father Time's Revenge on Economics *K. Schuler*
The Anthropology of Tyranny *L. Cronk*
The Roots of Apartheid *P. Boettke, S. Horwitz, D. Prychitko*

VOL. 1, NO. 2 SPRING 1987

Methodology with a Small *m* *M. Blaug*
Technology & The Control of Labor *R. Kroszner*
Green Politics & Post-Modern Liberalism *G. diZerega*
Suburban Stateways *D. Beito*
The Irrationality of Planning *D. Steele*
Reason & History in Hayek *R. Antonio*
Lost Illusions *M. Mueller, D. Lavoie*
States of Rest *S. Aspromourgos, K. Schuler*

VOL. 1, NO. 3 SUMMER 1987

Is Liberalism Viable? *J. Friedman*
Liberalism in Search of Its Self *D. Auerbach*
Conservatism, Liberalism & Ideology *C. Kukathas*
Liberalism & Democracy *G. diZerega*
Ludwig Lachmann & the Farther Reaches of Austrian Economics *D. Prychitko*
The Kaleidic World of Ludwig Lachmann *R. Garrison*
Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Social Theory *T. Palmer*
Polanyi's Critique of Objectivity *D. Lavoie, D. Steele*
The Two Cultures & Methodology *D. McCloskey*
The Roots of Apartheid *P. Hoffenberg, P. Boettke, S. Horwitz, D. Prychitko*

VOL. 1, NO. 4 FALL 1987

The Control of Information *J.D. Peters*
Technology Out of Control *M. Mueller*
Has Market Coordination Been Replaced? *R. Rector*
Cooperation in Anonymity *R. Ebeling*
Merger Paranoia *D. Boudreaux*
Trivializing Anti-Psychiatry *R. Vatz, L. Weinberg*
The Crisis of Libertarian Dualism *C. Sciabarra*
Rational Expectations & Austrian Economics *C. Phelan*
Religion & Post-Modern Liberalism *M. Schwartz, G. diZerega*

Back issues available for $6.50 each ($7.50 for libraries), including postage & handling. Add $1 per issue for shipment outside U.S. Please pay in U.S. dollars by check, money order or Visa/MasterCard (specify which card and include name of cardholder, date of expiration, card number and signature). Send orders and payment to:

CRITICAL REVIEW
532 Broadway, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10012 USA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CRITICAL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF BOOKS AND IDEAS

EDITOR
Jeffrey M. Friedman *University of California, Berkeley*

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Dennis Auerbach *Harvard University*
Milton Mueller *University of Pennsylvania*

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
W. W. Bartley, III *Stanford University*
David Boaz *Cato Institute*
Tyler Cowen *University of California, Irvine*
Stephen Cox *University of California, San Diego*
Gus diZerega *University of Puget Sound*
Richard Epstein *University of Chicago*
Antony Flew *University of Reading*
Roger W. Garrison *Auburn University*
John Gray *Oxford University*
Don Lavoie *George Mason University*
Henri Lepage *Institut Economique de Paris*
Stephen Macedo *Harvard University*
Eric Mack *Tulane University*
J. G. Merquior *Mexico City*
Tom G. Palmer *The Catholic University of America*
Jeffrey Paul *Bowling Green State University*
Earl C. Ravenal *Georgetown University*
Mario J. Rizzo *New York University*
Jeremy Shearmur *Institute for Humane Studies*
David Ramsay Steele *Institute for Humane Studies*
Thomas Szasz *State University of New York, Upstate Medical Center*
Lawrence H. White *New York University*

PUBLISHER Howard S. Rich

MANAGING EDITOR Mark Friedman

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT Barbra L. Schwartz

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Transaction SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MODERN Society

SOCIETY has been since its inception in 1963 the periodical of record in social science and public policy. It delivers a lucid, penetrating picture of how forces at work today shape the world of tomorrow. Clear, forceful, and authoritative social science reporting provides you with the resources to draw your own conclusions about society. "**SOCIETY** has been well ahead of ordinary news coverage," according to *Harper's*. *Time* calls it an "excellent magazine." *Newsweek* says that "**SOCIETY** offers an authoritative, jargonless, and well-illustrated view of the social sciences."

Articles of enduring interest already published on:

WORK AND WELFARE • **Sar A. Levitan** on the evolving welfare system • **Walter E. Williams** warns of impending disaster • **William F. Whyte** advocates workplace democracy • **Neal Q. Herrick** wants to learn from our mistakes.

PROSPECTS FOR NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION • **Louis René Beres** explores Israeli options • **Stephen J. Cimbala** explains superpower strategies • **Robert A. Friedlander** considers terrorism and nuclear decisions.

INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY **Irving Louis Horowitz** on scientific freedom and national security • **Walter Laqueur** sees intelligence coming in from the cold • **Kenneth Prewitt** forecasts a role for social science.

SHAPING AMERICAN SOCIETY • **Robert Coles** reevaluates our moral lives • **Anthony Downs** explains living with advanced telecommunications • **Judith R. Blau** claims high culture is mass culture.

FOREIGN TRADE AND DIPLOMACY • **Murray L. Weidenbaum** criticizes Japan bashing • **Ezra F. Vogel** advises America and Japan • **Abba Eban** considers interest and conscience in diplomacy • **Paul Hollander** exposes political tourism.

Irving Louis Horowitz (*Rutgers University*) is editor-in-chief of SOCIETY. Howard S. Becker (*Northwestern University*) and Aaron Wildavsky (*University of California*) are senior editors. Associate editors include: Linda H. Aiken (*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*), Myron J. Aronoff (*Rutgers University*), Peter L. Berger (*Boston University*), Carl Gershman (*National Endowment for Democracy*), Allen D. Grimshaw (*Indiana University*), Jeanne Guillemin (*Boston College*), John R. Howard (*State University of New York*), James E. Katz (*Bell Communications Research*), Wilson Carey McWilliams (*Rutgers University*), Richard John Neuhaus (*Rockford Institute*), Kenneth Prewitt (*Rockefeller Foundation*), Robert F. Rich (*University of Illinois*), Ray C. Rist (*U.S. General Accounting Office*), George Sternlieb (*Rutgers University*), Kenneth W. Thompson (*University of Virginia*), Bernard L. Weinstein (*Southern Methodist University*), and Carol H. Weiss (*Harvard University*)

Published bimonthly. Founded 1962.
Subscription rates: Individuals $30/yr, $55/2yr, $75/3yr; Institutions $38/yr, $70/2yr, $95/3yr; Students $15/yr. Domestic first class add $11/yr. Outside the USA add $4.50/yr surface mail, $25/yr airmail. Single copies (min. order $10): Individuals $6/current issues, $10/back issues; Institutions $7/current issues, $10/back issues. ISSN 0417-2011

Please address inquiries and orders to: **Society**
Transaction Periodicals Consortium • Dept. 2000 • Rutgers—The State University • New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Exclusive distributors for Japan:
Maruzen Company, Ltd., 3-10 Nihonbashi,
20 Chome, Chuo-Ku, Tokyo, Japan

Exclusive distributors for Europe and the British Isles:
Clio Distribution Service, 55 St. Thomas St., Oxford,
Oxfordshire, OX1 1JG, England

TRANSACTION PERIODICALS CONSORTIUM

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS

Volume 2 Number 1 WINTER 1988

5 **Editorial** JEFFREY FRIEDMAN

Essays

8 Liberalism in Poland ANDRZEJ WALICKI

39 Habermas: A Critical Approach JEREMY SHEARMUR

Review Essays

51 Subjective Reality JOHN HOSPERS
The View from Nowhere
by Thomas Nagel

65 Sense Perception and the Reality of the World PETER MUNZ
The Evidence of the Senses: A Realistic Theory of Perception
by David Kelley

78 The Evolution of Knowledge ANTHONY O'HEAR
Our Knowledge of the Growth of Knowledge: Popper or Wittgenstein?
by Peter Munz

92 Evolutionary Epistemology I. C. JARVIE
Evolutionary Epistemology, Theory of Rationality, and the Sociology of Knowledge
ed. Gerard Radnitzky and W. W. Bartley, III

103 Human History as Natural History LEE CRONK
Despotism and Differential Reproduction: A Darwinian View of History
by Laura L. Betzig

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

111 How We Got Here — DAVID RAMSAY STEELE
The Principles of Social Evolution
by C. R. Hallpike
Culture and the Evolutionary Process
by Robert Boyd and Peter J. Richerson

Letters

144 Liberalism in Search of Its Self — TOM G. PALMER, SHELDON RICHMAN, DENNIS AUERBACH, JEFFREY FRIEDMAN

CRITICAL REVIEW, A JOURNAL OF BOOKS AND IDEAS (ISSN 0891-3811) is published quarterly. Subscriptions: one year, $19 ($25 outside U.S.; institutions $29; non-U.S. institutions $37); two years, $34 ($45 outside U.S.; institutions $58; non-U.S. institutions $74). Add $5 per year for foreign air mail service. Send advertising queries, address changes or subscription payments (in U.S. money orders or checks payable in U.S. currency) to CRITICAL REVIEW, 532 Broadway, 7th floor, Rm. 102, New York, NY 10012; (212) 925-9134. To order by Visa or MasterCard send type of card, name of account, account number, expiration date and signature. Newsstand/bookstore distributor: B. DeBoer, 113 E. Centre Street–Rear, Nutley, NJ 07110; (201) 667-9300.

Address double-spaced letters to Editor, CRITICAL REVIEW, Editorial Office, P.O. Box 10085, Berkeley, CA 94709. While unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, they may not be returned or acknowledged if not accepted for publication. Style sheet available on request.

Design: Anselm Design, San Anselmo, Cal. Typesetting: G&S Typesetters, Austin, Tex. Printing: S. R. Jacobs & Assoc., Carmel, Ind. © 1988 by Libertarian Review Foundation. All rights reserved. Postmaster: Send address changes to CRITICAL REVIEW, 532 Broadway, 7th floor, New York, NY 10012.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It would have been simple to open the first issue of CRITICAL REVIEW with a declaration that it was to be a journal of classical liberal or libertarian thought—simple but not quite accurate. Libertarianism, due to its association with the American political party of that name, suggests adherence to a platform that rigidly rejects government interference in economic or personal affairs; yet CRITICAL REVIEW embraces no party line. Classical liberalism, to those unfamiliar with its recent revival, may seem a discredited and irrelevant doctrine of interest only to historians of political thought; yet CRITICAL REVIEW aims to apply classical liberal insights to contemporary intellectual issues, and is not interested in the hagiography of sterile dogmas.

More importantly, CRITICAL REVIEW is not a propaganda vehicle for any ideology. It is as important that its pages bring modern criticisms to bear on classical liberal-libertarian ("liberal" for short) ideas as it is that they engage non-liberal perspectives in a critical but respectful dialogue. Even this statement, however, is a bit misleading; it perpetuates the dichotomy between "our" ideas and "theirs." While CRITICAL REVIEW was founded by people who have been deeply influenced by liberal ideas, we do not by any stretch of the imagination consider liberalism to be the last word. Thus CRITICAL REVIEW's reliance on review essays, which enable scholars from a variety of perspectives to confront each other's views more readily.

All of this would have sounded even more abstract a year ago. Now, five issues of CRITICAL REVIEW have put some flesh on those bare bones. Coming issues will pay detailed attention to the rethinking of both contemporary and historical liberalism; to Marxism; and to struc-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turalism and post-structuralism, among many other topics. We hope these explorations will prove stimulating for the many readers who have encouraged our efforts to date, and that those readers will be joined by more who are tired of the mutual isolation of liberal and non-liberal thought.

* * *

As indicated by the reaction to Dennis Auerbach's "Liberalism in Search of Its Self" (Summer 1987) in the Letters section of this issue, the question of the status of the individual is central to liberal thought. A future issue will explore the status of the individual in greater depth—anthropologically, methodologically and politically. In the current issue, John Hospers takes up philosophical aspects of the individual in his review of Thomas Nagel's *The View from Nowhere*. He argues that the very subjectivity which makes the individual seem evanescent and, in the moral realm, unimportant is actually a valid source of the conviction that the individual is both real and significant.

The status of our perception of the world has been considered problematic for reasons similar to those which have made individualism seem dubious, which may help explain the correlation between individualism and epistemological realism. Peter Munz finds David Kelley's attempt to rescue reality via perceptual evidence inadequate, but proposes an alternative in the turn to evolutionary epistemology—a radically new approach which attempts to use not the evidence of the senses, but the evidence of their origin in natural selection, to establish the reality of the world they seem to register. I. C. Jarvie analyzes the most recent work in this new field, joining Anthony O'Hear in pointing out the serious scientific and philosophical hurdles such an epistemology must clear.

Like Jarvie, O'Hear raises the issues of intellectual and cultural evolution, intriguingly contrasting Popper's and Hayek's views. Lee Cronk surveys related questions in his discussion of sociobiology and the evolution of despotism, and David Ramsay Steele pursues cultural evolution further, returning to the status of the individual—now considered not philosophically but socially—with a seminal essay juxtaposing a sophisticated theory of "cumulative rational selection" against conventional functionalist anthropology. Steele's theory reintroduces contingency into the evolution of culture, allowing historians to join anthropologists among its students.

Also in this issue, Jeremy Shearmur contributes a prolegomenon to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a critique of Habermas, and Andrzej Walicki draws on his intimate familiarity with the Polish intellectual milieu to discuss the contemporary Polish liberals. His essay is far more than a unique analysis of the situation in Poland: it offers provocative insights into the nature of liberalism itself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Andrzej Walicki

LIBERALISM IN POLAND

When I left Poland in November, 1981, the situation there was bleak, and not only for geopolitical reasons. At that time, I wrote that

> Solidarity is a product of socialism. It might be furiously critical of socialism on the conscious level, but it is deeply socialist on the unconscious level—if by socialism we mean egalitarianism and collectivism; the primacy of politics over economics, cancelling the objective laws of the market; belief that political power can and should regulate everything in social life—in this sense, belief in an *unlimited* political power (although, of course, such power could be exercised in a democratic manner, and reflect the will of a genuine majority); the subsumption of private by public law, reducing law to the role of a mere instrument of economic or social policy, and entailing a disregard of individual rights, property rights, private contracts, and so forth.
>
> If all of these things characterize socialism, then Solidarity must be seen as a socialist mass movement, one striving for at least a share of political power, but not one seeking to limit political power in the name of individual freedom. It is a movement aiming not so much at the separation of economics from politics, but rather at the democratization of politico-economic decision-making. It is a democratic movement, but it can hardly be called liberal, because it opposes authoritarian bureaucratic collectivism not in the name of individualistic values, but in the name of a democratic collectivism of the masses. It wants to *divide* political power, but it is not sufficiently aware of the desirability of *limiting*

Andrzej Walicki, formerly at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, is O'Neill Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame. His most recent book is *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> *the scope* of all political power, including democracy. In this sense we can even say that the political thinking of the leaders of Solidarity (not to mention that of its ordinary members) is contaminated to some extent by the spirit of socialist totalitarianism—in spite of their verbal condemnations of all kinds of totalitarian power.

I finished this article on December 1, 1981.

Two weeks after I wrote those words, martial law was imposed on Poland and as a result, I felt compelled to withdraw such harsh criticisms from publication. The years which followed saw the opposition, defeated but not broken, take on aspects of a moral crusade.[1] Its leaders believed that effective pressure on the government could be exercised only through a constant show of intransigence. Intellectuals acting within the opposition tried to delegitimize the system by organizing a widespread, ostentatious refusal to cooperate with official institutions; the authorities, whose self-confidence was obviously in very bad shape, proved vulnerable to this tactic.

From a longer-term perspective one could see a remarkable reversal of roles, since under Stalinism it was the authorities who used and abused politico-moral pressure. In both cases organized pressure was aimed at independent-minded individuals, who were to be silenced in the name of unity. In the case of Stalinism this was the propagandistic "moral and political unity of society," whereas in the case of the opposition after martial law was declared it was something much more real: unity, or solidarity, with the suffering and frustrated nation.

This parallel is, of course, a very limited one. In sharp contrast to Stalinist terror, the "moral terror" exercised by the radical opposition of the 1980s was not supported by physical coercion, nor did it create a situation in which people brave enough to swim against the current would have felt doomed to silence. The most interesting among the courageous dissenters of the 1980s were the classical liberals, disciples of F. A. Hayek, from whom they had learned about the crucial importance of economic freedom and about the often-ignored conceptual difference between liberalism and democracy.[2]

Some of these new liberals acted on their own behalf, while others associated themselves with the Church or tried to find a sympathetic audience within the Party. Paradoxically, they could be officially tolerated to a certain extent because the reform-minded wing of the Party wanted allies in its struggle to introduce market mechanisms into the economy. This struggle involved criticism of precisely those deeply-rooted egalitarian attitudes which were characteristic of the ethos of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Solidarity, and which were often invoked (sincerely or not) by the bureaucratic opponents of reform as well. As a result Janusz Korwin Mikke, an able, orthodox and indefatigable follower of Hayek and Friedman, was sometimes allowed to ridicule the nonsensical features of the command economy, as well as the doubtful blessings of Poland's ever-expanding system of welfare services, in the pages of *Polityka,* an organ representing the liberal wing of the Party.

Crazy Liberals

At the beginning of 1985 a group of independent journalists proclaimed the reactivation of the "party of crazy liberals" under the chairmanship of Korwin-Mikke.[3] The most celebrated among them, Stefan Kisielewski, explained in his column in *Tygodnik Powszechny* (*Catholic Weekly*) that this party had existed in 1948–56, dying out when its deputy-chairman, Leopold Tyrmand (in later years editor of *The Rockford Papers*), had strongly protested against Kisielewski's presence in the newly-elected Polish Parliament. Kisielewski also expressed his regrets that the program of the "crazy liberals," which openly demanded a wholesale reprivatization of industry, is often treated as a joke, rather than as a serious proposal.[4]

When I returned to Poland in May 1987, after almost six years in the West, the Polish intellectual scene looked very different from what I had expected. Liberals were no longer an oddity, a lunatic fringe, or, at best, a group of crazy intellectuals advocating some interesting but outlandish ideas in a provocative way. They had managed to become the most influential and dynamic intellectual group, one which was strategically located and which put other currents of thought on the defensive. Their followers and sympathizers could be seen almost everywhere and their influence powerfully contributed to a general change in the intellectual climate. Briefly stated, this change involved a shift in the focus of attention from politics to economics. It also involved moving from a political radicalism which was rooted psychologically in the leftist tradition and which lacked a clear economic program to a broadly defined New Right, one which combined political moderation with a firm commitment to radical change in the economic system. Added to this was an important change of style. Now one could detect a sense of humor, sometimes of self-mockery, supplanting romantic gestures of defiance and solemn celebrations of the national tragedy; pragmatic flexibility instead of moralistic fundamen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

talism; and, above all, genuine disgust with attempts to exercise "moral terrorism" as still practised in the circles of the "old opposition."

Of course, such an important change could not have taken place overnight; it is still in process, rather than an accomplished fact. And, to be sure, this development could only have started under the new political conditions created by the general amnesty for political prisoners of September 1986, the policy of pragmatic liberalization which followed, and, last but not least, Gorbachev's *perestroika*. The overwhelmingly sympathetic attitude towards the latter among the "new opposition" is well illustrated by a drawing on the cover of an underground "Christian-liberal" periodical.[5] It shows Gorbachev smilingly sitting on the throne of the Romanovs as the Polish "realistic opposition" approaches him with the same words which had once been used in the famous address of the Polish conservative politicians from Galicia to the Austrian Emperor: "At your side, Your Majesty, we stand and wish to stand." (The Galician address of 1866 was followed by the enaction of the Austrian constitution and by a series of important concessions to Galicia that made it *de facto* into an autonomous province).

Since the wealth of material on this subject is too great to be presented in one article, I have of necessity adopted a very selective approach, limiting myself to two tasks: first, to render a brief account of those characteristics of the liberal revival which I myself observed during my two-month visit to Poland, and, second, to present a brief summary of the views of the two most outstanding ideologists of the movement.

New Developments

Going to Poland a few weeks before the third Papal visit involved a risk of talking with people exclusively about "the Polish Pope." This, however, did not happen to me. I had no difficulty in finding people who were eager to discuss other topics, particularly the proposed economic reforms. The reform guidelines were formulated in three important documents in April, all of which strongly supported the marketization of the economy.

The first of these documents was the parliamentary speech of the Prime Minister, Prof. Zbigniew Messner, and his "Theses Concerning the Second Stage of the Reform."[6] Here were no ritual quotations from Marx or from Lenin. Messner saw a market economy as the only reliable means of overcoming the economic crisis, and postulated the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

development of "socialist entrepreneurship" and "socialist competition." There was a clear statement that the economy should be independent of the administration, and that central planning had to be replaced with a multitude of differently structured and independent economic units, all of them seeking profits and controlled by banks rather than by administrative organs. What had happened to Marx's obsessive idea of rational, all-embracing planning, seen as "mastery over human fate" and sharply opposed to a monetary exchange economy? Did Messner not recall Marx's curious parallel between the socialist economy and the activities of Robinson Crusoe—a parallel which stressed that in both cases there is a *single subject* of economic activity, although in the one case it is simply an individual, while in the other it is a collective endowed with a single will and working in accordance with a settled plan?[7] Had the Polish Premier never read Marx's *Capital?* If he had, he must have decided to ignore it completely.

I was present at the meeting of the Polish Sociological Association at which Messner's "Theses" were discussed with his Deputy, Prof. Zdzislaw Sadowski.[8] The Deputy Premier spoke about "enterprise," "competition" and "profit" as universal economic categories, fully applicable to socialism, something which obviously amounted to a complete rejection of Marx's view of these categories as historical, transient, and applicable only to capitalism. The reaction of the audience was, on the whole, rather favorable, but somewhat skeptical. Was it really possible, some people asked, to treat the economy as a completely autonomous sphere, and to cure its illness without curing social ills of a non-economic nature? The political intention behind such questions was easily discernible, and it was delightfully paradoxical to see a member of a Communist government compelled to defend the classical liberal view that economics should remain independent from politics.

An interesting commentary on this situation can be found in a paper by a well-known sociologist, Prof. Stefan Nowak, and endorsed by the rest of the elected leadership of the Sociological Association. It pointed out that the government was truly interested in the success of Messner's reform but that, unfortunately, it lacked support among independent social forces (due to their political estrangement), while at the same time it faced resistance in the ranks of its own traditional supporters. At the beginning of my visit to Poland this text was treated as strictly confidential; it was soon published in the underground press, however, and a few weeks later was reprinted officially.[9] Small wonder, since the identical diagnosis was presented in May, in General Ja-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ruzelski's presence, by another sociologist, Prof. Jan Szczepanski, at a meeting of the Consultative Council—an institution called into being in 1986 as part of the government's policy of liberalization. His critique of the economy of "really existing socialism" was sharply worded, and was very much in tune with the position of the advocates of radical marketization. He warned, however, that what was economically imperative might turn out to be politically impossible since the party could not tolerate market mechanisms to the point where they began to create social forces which undermined its political rule.[10] Thus the Polish political elite was described as facing a truly impossible situation: the threat of total economic collapse clearly perceived by the government pushed it to seek salvation in market mechanisms, while its own political interests, vigorously defended by its lower echelons, pushed it in the opposite direction.

As we shall see, theorists of the liberal opposition defined this dilemma much earlier, but came to less pessimistic conclusions.[11] Radical economic reform, they argued, must indeed bring about the liquidation of socialism, but why cannot socialism be liquidated without changing its name and infringing upon the interests of its ruling elite? Why cannot the personal interests of the present political elite be dissociated from their interest in maintaining socialism as a system? True, this elite was not democratically elected; consequently, its vital interests are necessarily opposed to democratization. But democratization should not be confused with individual freedom, especially economic freedom. Market mechanisms which generate a genuine increase in individual freedom are conceivable without democracy, and vice versa.

In the pages of *Stanczyk,* an underground organ of liberals and conservatives, Janusz Korwin-Mikke compared Messner's "Theses" with two other programmatic documents—the economic program of Solidarity and the "Charter of Private Economic Enterprise," a manifesto accepted by participants of an economic conference organized by the Catholic University of Lublin.[12] In Mikke's view, Solidarity's program was the weakest, although otherwise much better than its earlier economic statements. Its weaknesses stemmed from two sources: first, from misguided efforts to combine marketization with the policy of full employment, indexing of wages and governmental subsidies; second, from attempts to link economic liberalization to political democratization on the one hand and "economic democracy" (workers' management) on the other. Mikke obviously felt that such an emphasis on democracy could promote the cause of Solidarity only by compromising the goal of a truly radical, consistently market-oriented

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

economic reform. (Similar arguments were to be used by General Jaruzelski in his talks with Vice-President Bush.)[13]

The other document, the "Charter of Private Economic Enterprise"—the personal triumph of Prof. Stefan Kurowski, the well-known champion of a market economy who had once been the target of a violent attack by no less than Wladislaw Gomulka—merited Mikke's highest praise. It starts with an interpretation of the social teaching of the Church as sanctifying private property by viewing it as a natural right of man, an irreplaceable guarantee of human dignity and freedom, as well as the realization of the principle of "subsidiarity," according to which social life should concentrate in intermediary groups, free from the interference of political authorities. It describes private enterprise and free competition as the most effective means of mobilizing human energy, releasing innovative talents, and making people self-reliant, disciplined and responsible. In the application of these principles to the situation in Poland the Charter demands significantly wider scope for the private sector in the Polish economy, constitutional guarantees for its existence, stability of fiscal policies and the removal of all legal obstacles to the creation of private businesses. The official nomenclature should be changed by removing the pejorative term "non-socialized sector" and replacing it with the better-sounding "private sector" ("private," the authors felt, sounds better because privacy is an essential human right). In order to ensure that their legitimate interests are properly defended, private entrepreneurs should be represented in a Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which would also play a political role as an independent, democratically elected body. Every effort should be made to reconstruct the entrepreneurial ethos, and to raise the feeling of self-confidence among private entrepreneurs in Poland.

The Charter has been printed both unofficially, in *Stanczyk*,[14] and officially, in the *Catholic Review* (*Przeglad Katolicki*), a weekly associated with the Primate of Poland. Daniel Passent, a well-known publicist from *Polityka*, was uneasy about this, as if he were afraid that the leading role of *Polityka* in promoting economic reform might be overshadowed by more radical champions of marketization. In his eyes the Charter represented the most extreme apotheosis of private entrepreneurship since the times of Adam Smith.[15] He interpreted it as a symptom of the general shift towards the right, observable both in Poland and in the West, and warned his readers that reprivatization should not be seen as universal remedy. He also critically commented on the ever-expanding role of the Catholic Church, and expressed suspicion that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

under a different economic system Catholic newspapers would use the language of "natural rights" differently, stressing not the natural right to private property, but rather such "natural rights" as the right to work, the right to free medical care, and so on.

The Rejection of Romanticism

Let us turn now to the "shift to the right," as visible in the ranks of the "new opposition." I had the occasion to be invited on June 17th to a meeting of different groups associated in the political club called Dziekania (an allusion to the Primate's residence), organized—unofficially—under the auspices of a veteran of Catholic "political realism," Prof. Stanislaw Stomma.[16] This most interesting club, conceived of as a forum for the new, constructive and liberal opposition, consists of several groups with different political genealogies. I was able to recognize at least five such groups: (1) a group of young "national democrats" led by Aleksander Hall,[17] once calling themselves Young Poland; it was present at the birth of Solidarity in Gdansk and under Martial Law continued its activities underground; (2) a group from Glos (Voice) led by Antoni Macierewicz, a former member of the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR); (3) a group of Christian Liberals from Cracow led by Miroslaw Dzielski, founder of the Industrial Society of Cracow and member of the Social Council of the Primate; (4) a group of dissenters from PAX, an organization established in the first post-war years with the aim of harnessing Catholics to cooperate with Communists; and, finally (5) Marcin Król and the group of *Res publica*—a monthly liberal periodical which has recently succeeded in having its existence legalized, and now appears officially, as an organ of independent private enterprise: Res-publica Company, Ltd.

A full account of what I heard in Dziekania does not fall within the scope of this article. What I can attempt here must be limited to a brief presentation of the common denominator of all these groups, strikingly different from the views and principles of the "old opposition."[18]

First, a new diagnosis of the Polish situation is afoot. Poland is no longer seen as a totalitarian country; on the contrary, it is perceived as representing a very advanced stage of detotalitarianization. Its political elite is no longer militantly ideological, self-confident, able to mobilize the masses through intimidation and indoctrination. Its attempts at achieving total political control over people's conduct, including economic conduct, has ended in spectacular failure. This has put the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authorities on the defensive, and greatly increased the scope of possible freedom. True, the authorities are afraid of loosening controls, but *total* control is no longer their dream; they consciously reject totalitarian temptations as unrealistic, as feeding the spirit of resistance, and at the same time, as creating dangerous illusions. Totalitarianism would also entail for the rulers the dreadful consequence of being responsible for absolutely everything.

They realize that reliance on naked force is not enough to secure a necessary minimum of voluntary social cooperation—a minimum required for their own survival. As a consequence they are sincerely striving for a workable compromise with the principal forces of society, as well as for some limitation of their political responsibilities. If the "old opposition," typified by people like Adam Michnik, still describes the regime as "totalitarian," it does so either out of frustration and blind hatred, or as part of a clever tactic aimed at increasing its own prestige. A struggle against "totalitarianism" justifies silencing other trends within the opposition (since a struggle with monolithic power demands monolithic unity), provides a convenient rationale for moral condemnation of compromises (since totalitarianism is absolute evil), and, most importantly, enables the opposition to present itself as a kind of religious crusade (since totalitarianism is equivalent to the rule of the devil).[19] This explanation of the actual uses of "anti-totalitarian" phraseology was set forth by Dzielski, and further elaborated by Pawel Spiewak in the first issue of the newly legalized *Res publica*. Spiewak stressed that the adoption of a heroically "anti-totalitarian" posture leads to politics being replaced by moralistic attitudes, and to a dangerous, dogmatic blindness that arrogantly ignores the facts of life. A radical anti-totalitarian is a self-righteous moral crusader who is convinced of his own "angelic nature," and is therefore incapable of self-criticism and unwilling to listen to the arguments of others.[20]

Second, new methods of action are being pursued. The idea of totalitarianism, once close to reality but now transformed into a myth, aims at proving the unchangeable nature of "really existing socialism," and therefore diverts attention from the real possibilities of changing it. In order to discover these possibilities and to make use of them, the "new opposition" must rid itself of moral fundamentalism and the romantic love of symbolic gestures. Instead it must become flexible and clever, with due appreciation for the flexible and clever policies of the ruling political elite. It must learn to differentiate between the system and the ruling elite, and try to set the second against the first. Many leading members of the governing elite are sincerely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disgusted with the system. To deliberately offend and antagonize them, treating them as villains who deserve to be personally blamed for all evils in Polish life, is an infantile and counterproductive policy. It must be remembered that the really important task of the opposition is to change *the system,* and not to remove the present rulers from power. Overthrowing the sytem would be much easier if the ruling elite did not unanimously rise to its defense. The system is rotten through, and the ruling elite is so thoroughly de-ideologized that even the active cooperation of a significant part of the latter in liquidating the former is easily conceivable.

Third, a realistic attitude toward politics is emerging, one which holds that politics should be based on rational calculation. Resorting to popular pressure might be good as a means to an end, but yielding to popular emotions is self-defeating, if not outright suicidal. Sound political thought should be guided by the national interest, not by abstract ideas or the changing moods of the politicized part of the population. The Polish political elite has learned to seek legitimation of its rule in terms of national interest, i.e., no longer in terms of Marxist ideology.[21] This creates an opportunity for a meaningful, although difficult, dialogue with them. By contrast, the "old opposition," as well as émigré politicians, still think ideologically, in terms of an anti-totalitarian crusade, which means that "globalist" causes of anti-Communism are closer to their hearts than are the concrete, tangible interests of their country. This derives from habits of mind characteristic of the left or, rather, of all radical positions. The "new opposition" should oppose such attitudes as dangerous for the world and harmful for Poland.

Fourth, the attitude toward the Polish People's Republic is shifting. Despite its dependence on the Soviet Union, and despite the Soviet role in its inception, the existing Polish state should be recognized as Polish—i.e., not as an "occupying force," but as the property of the nation. Otherwise it will have to remain a "party-state," in perpetual conflict with the nation. Poles should overcome their anarchic instincts and learn to appreciate the benefits of their statehood, all of its shortcomings notwithstanding. The transformation of a "party-state" into a "nation-state" would be made easier by guaranteeing the material interests of the people who now occupy commanding positions in the state. The opposition should try to release national energy by founding various associations with concrete, constructive aims. Its activities should be made legal, if possible, thereby contributing to the institutionalization of civil society within the legal framework of the state.

Finally, the new opposition argues that first priority should be al-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lotted to a thorough economic reform, i.e., to the replacement of the statist command economy by a market economy with a large and modern private sector. In the struggle for consistent marketization the new opposition should be the vanguard, going much further than the reformist wing of the party, and, also, further than the Church—although whenever possible it should act in close cooperation with, and even under the umbrella of, the Church. The importance of the Church stems from the fact that the main problem of contemporary Poland is the degree to which its civilization has been degraded, as a result of which it has almost ceased to belong to Europe. To overcome this painful degradation it is imperative to return to the vital sources of "Latin civilization," something which can be achieved through moral revival.

These two objectives—close alliance with the Church and commitment to a radical marketization—are not always easy to reconcile. The Polish Church, although much more traditionalist in its defense of private enterprise than, for instance, its American counterpart, could not endorse the extreme version of the liberal program of Korwin-Mikke, while Mikke as a libertarian-minded individualist could not accept certain aspects of the ethical teachings of the Church. The organizers of the meeting of Dziekania did everything they could to avoid a possible clash of opinions at the time of the Papal visit, but the potential for conflict between "tough-minded" liberals and the Church could not remain unnoticed. A young ultra-orthodox liberal from Wroclaw accused the social teaching of the Church of always being hopelessly anachronistic. The encyclical *Rerum Novarum,* he said, condemned socialism at a time when it could still be seen as an embodiment of human hopes, while John Paul II's *Laborem exercens* yielded to the influence of socialism at a time which was witness to the unavoidable decline of socialism and the rebirth of capitalism.[22]

It was not shocking to hear such an opinion. I must confess, however, that I was somewhat surprised that no one out of the large audience rose to John Paul's defence.

Two Thinkers from Cracow

In order to understand the intellectual sources of the liberal tide in Poland it is necessary to characterize some of its chief ideologists. In justice one would start with the Nestor of Polish liberalism, Stefan Kisielewski, but this would involve writing about the entire post-war

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

period in Poland. Were Kisielewski omitted, however, other vigorous and brilliant representatives of the movement, even Korwin-Mikke, could be omitted as well. Following the logic of this reasoning, I have decided (somewhat arbitrarily) to discuss only two thinkers: Bronislaw Lagowski and Miroslaw Dzielski. The originality of both of these men consists mostly in their use of Hayekian liberalism in their interpretation of the situation in Poland under martial law and after, as well as in their efforts to propagate liberal ideas within the two establishments—the party-state establishment (in Lagowski's case) and the established Church (in the case of Dzielski).

It is not accidental that both of these men live in Cracow. This ancient and beautiful city, once the capital of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, has earned the well-deserved reputation of being the main center of what might be called enlightened conservatism in Poland. In the second half of the nineteenth century, after the abortive uprising of 1863 in Russian Poland, it produced an influential current of conservative thought whose representatives indulged in the pastime of mocking the romantic illusions of unrepentant insurrectionists. These conservatives named themselves after Stanczyk—a royal jester of the sixteenth century, famous for his patriotic struggle with the illusions of his time. (The above-mentioned periodical by the same name, edited by Korwin-Mikke, is also named after him.) After World War II Cracow became the cradle of so-called "neopositivism"[23]—a movement combining non-communist principles, programmatic opposition to "political heroism" and advocacy of mutually acceptable pragmatic compromises with the Communist rulers. (While Stomma was the main ideologist of this movement, Kisielewski represented its "orthodox-liberal" wing.) Finally, after the imposition of martial law, the intellectuals from Cracow as a rule proved to be more sober than their colleagues from Warsaw, Gdansk or Wroclaw. The Jagiellonian University of Cracow has not become a forum for symbolic protests; instead, it made the best possible use of the newly introduced law on higher education and, under the leadership of the democratically elected academic authorities, achieved the status of a genuinely autonomous institution. Underground political debates flourished in Cracow no less than elsewhere, but the most original position in these debates, the so-called "Cracow school of liberalism," differed sharply from the ideas of the Solidarity underground.[24]

Bronislaw Lagowski, an associate professor at Jagiellonian University, can legitimately be regarded as one of the spiritual fathers of this school. He cannot be seen, however, as its leader, as he has always

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kept a certain distance, consciously avoiding direct involvement in underground activities. In spite of his strongly anti-Marxist and anti-socialist views he was, and still is, a member of the Party. He was not well known during Gierek's time because his splendid, sharp-witted articles did not appear under his own name; he published them in the Cracow Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* using pseudonyms. After Martial Law he began to write under his own name, but this time in different press organs: in *Polityka* and in *Zdanie* (*Opinion*), a Cracow monthly run by Marxist intellectuals who support political and economic reforms.[25] In 1985 he published a collection of his articles under the title *What is Better Than Truth?*[26] This small but pithy book contains *both* his articles from *Tygodnik Powszechny* and his contributions to *Polityka* and *Zdanie*. In this manner an intellectual belonging to the Party not only disclosed the fact that he had been publishing for years in a Catholic weekly (one, it should be noted, more and more clearly associated with the opposition). He also revealed something even more amazing: the illusionary character of many ideological divisions, and the surprising degree of de-ideologization in periodicals which could have been expected to cling to at least some Marxist dogmas. Moreover, after reading Lagowski's book one might arrive at the somewhat strange but entirely correct conclusion that after Martial Law the Catholic *Tygodnik Powszechny* felt more restrained by its ideological sympathies than did *Polityka* or the Marxist *Zdanie*. It is quite obvious that all of Lagowski's articles which appeared before Martial Law in *Tygodnik* could have appeared *after* Martial Law in *Polityka* or *Zdanie,* but it is equally clear that some of his later writings could not have been published in *Tygodnik,* as they were incompatible with its ideological, or moral, commitment to the defeated Solidarity.

The Problem with Solidarity

The best example of such a text is Lagowski's essay "Philosophy of Revolution, or Philosophy of the State?"—originally a lecture delivered at Jagiellonian University on the occasion of the May Day holiday under Martial Law (1982). Solidarity, the author claims, was a revolutionary movement, although its target was only the existing state and its political elite, not the socio-economic system of "really existing socialism." This was so because its participants were organic products of this very system, and had no conception of a different one. The Soli-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

darity revolution was a broad movement of the masses, deeply inbued with ideas of vulgar socialism, and striving above all for a primitively conceived distributive justice. True, the masses also wanted freedom, but in practice they showed extreme intolerance of economic freedom (as giving birth to inequalities), choosing instead, for example, a system of food rationing—that is, a mechanism that severely reduced individual freedom of choice, and by the same token greatly enhanced the scope of totalitarian control.[27] By "freedom" the revolutionalized masses meant self-government of the workers—an idea similar to that which initially inspired the Russian *soviets*. However, self-government of this sort, if consistently realized, would have been more collectivistic and more dangerous for individual freedom than the existing institutions of the state. Collective control over individual lives would have become more penetrating than ever, threatening the very existence of privacy. Nicholas Berdyaev said once, as against Rousseau, that there are situations in which the state defends the individual against society. Lagowski suggests that this was precisely the case with the Solidarity revolution in Poland.[28]

Unlike myself, Lagowski does not concede that there is a difference between vulgar socialism and Marxism.[29] On the contrary, he attacks Marxism as the main ideological source of egalitarian radicalism and revolutionary romanticism in Poland. He even accuses Leszek Kolakowski of greatly exaggerating the intellectual sophistication of Marxism and, consequently, of being much too mild in his criticism of Marxist ideas.[30] Lenin showed a much better understanding of Marxism when he reduced its essence to two simple dogmas: the abolition of private property in the means of production and the "dictatorship of the proletariat."[31] Unfortunately, these crude dogmas lie at the foundations of the present Polish state.

Happily, Lagowski continues, the Polish state has also its non-ideological, national legitimation.[32] This legitimation obliges it to safeguard the national heritage of Poland and to embody her political existence, owing to which the Poles are not a mere ethnic group, but a full-fledged nation. Ideological (Marxist) legitimation of the Polish state might be necessary under certain conditions, but national legitimation is prior to it and is always binding. Therefore, all demands based upon ideological promises must be subordinated to the national interest; otherwise, the national interest is sacrificed to the interests of revolutionary groups, undermining the legal order of the state in the name of its legitimizing ideology.

The meaning of this reasoning was somewhat camouflaged, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sufficiently clear nonetheless. The rulers of the state, Lagowski suggests, should get rid of ideological scruples. They should resist unrealistic demands of the workers, eschewing paralysis by the myth of "the working class"; they should realize that conservatism and legalism are now their natural allies, while their official ideology has become the breeding ground of dangerous utopianism and anarchy.[33] In other words, Lagowski appealed to the military rulers of Poland to free themselves from Marxist ideology and to use martial law to transform Poland into a non-ideological, law-abiding authoritarian state. Such a state, Lagowski added, should not subordinate the economy to "social justice" or any other ideological considerations. On the contrary, it should respect the autonomy of the economic sphere and defend its laws against the voluntarisms of different pressure groups, including the voluntarism of the masses.[34]

In his later articles Lagowski emphasized the necessity of limiting the scope of political power, thus making the liberal content of his message even clearer. Following Hayek, he stated that a consistent democracy, i.e., one which extends the principle of popular sovereignty into the economic sphere, is incompatible with economic freedom.[35] This led him to conclude that under "really existing socialism" an increase of freedom is possible only through liberalization, or limiting the scope of political power, and not through democratization, or wider participation in this power. Democratization of political power without previously limiting its scope, he argued, is neither possible nor desirable; attempts to realize such a program would bring about not the end of voluntaristic (arbitrary) tyranny, but the triumph of a completely anarchic, chaotic form of voluntarism.[36]

Liberalism vs. the Masses

The main assumption of Lagowski's view is, I think, the firm conviction that individual freedom is incompatible with arbitrary rule, especially voluntaristic collectivism, but remains fully compatible with the legal order of the modern (non-ideological) state and the spontaneous order of the market. Even more: he identifies individual freedom, the rule of law and the market economy as the three interdependent pillars of civilization, constantly threatened by ideologies expressing the atavistic instincts of a primitive horde. It is important to add that his view of civilization does not contain any relativistic ingredients. The title of his book is an allusion to Kolakowski's view that non-relative truth is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

merely an epistemoligical utopia, while in fact human minds are surrounded by myths and cannot raise themselves above them.[37] Against this view Lagowski sets his staunch defense of the classical definition of truth, and his belief that nothing can be better than truth.[38] He believes in the *objective* value of Western civilization. He does this because he does not want to oppose certain myths (say, communist mythology) in the name of others, closer to his heart but equally deprived of any objective foundation. He seeks truth and only truth, preferring the most bitter fact to rosy illusions.

For a firm believer in economic liberalism, such an attitude involves occupying a rather uncomfortable position in Poland. On the one hand, Lagowski knows what should be done to cure the endemic economic illnesses of Poland: he attacks communist doctrine as "economic millenarianism"[39] and repeatedly stresses the necessity of consistent marketization, entailing a substantial increase of inequalities, structural unemployment, and so on. On the other hand, he is deeply pessimistic about the chances for a market economy in Poland. This is not so much due to the vested interests of the political elite as to the attitudes dominant among the majority of the population. These attitudes are deeply rooted in its socialist mentality and are strongly supported by Catholicism. It is evident that in Lagowski's view the masses, in spite of their verbal commitment to anti-socialism, are in fact much more socialist than their rulers. The Church, in his view, has also gone a long way towards embracing socialist values. The "Polish Pope," not coincidentally, thinks about the economy in terms of "social justice," which reveals his lack of understanding of economic problems, as well as his lack of sympathy towards economic liberalism. The deceased Primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, in contrast, was steeped in the tradition of classical natural law, and, therefore, revealed a greater understanding of the importance of private property and economic freedom.[40]

As we see, Lagowski is not afraid of displaying independent thought and being provocatively critical. The targets of his criticism include both the sacredest cows of Poland (Solidarity and the Church) and its most respected intellectuals, including both Kolakowski and Czeslaw Milosz. Characteristically, he accuses Milosz of cherishing anti-capitalist prejudices. Thus, in an article entitled "Don't Be Afraid of Competition," Lagowski quotes Milosz's words about the "ontological evil" of capitalism, as expressed mostly in free competition, and about the "mystery" of socialism, which, despite all of its shortcomings, has the merit of making work less hard and the struggle for existence less

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brutal than under capitalist conditions.[41] In Lagowski's view, Milosz's judgment is utterly false, both factually and morally. Let us savor the amusing aspect of this situation: A Polish poet, living in the United States and writing in the militantly anti-Communist émigré monthly *Kultura,* stresses the alleged "ontological evil" of capitalism and the relative merits of "really existing socialism," while a professor from Cracow, writing in a Marxist monthly, accuses him of intellectually and morally supporting communism.

The reception of Lagowski's views has been, of course, varied, but remarkably favorable on the whole. In *Polityka* he was hailed as something of an extremist, but a useful ally nonetheless in the struggle against the "anti-economic mentality" of the majority of Poles, both within and outside of the Party. This paved the way for him to be unofficially consulted by some highly-placed government and Party officials. In the more "hard-line" organs of the Party he was sometimes described as a petty-bourgeois ideologist who expressed the viewpoint of private entrepreneurs in Poland. Yet even there he was treated respectfully, as a man who has shown patriotic concern about the fate of the Polish state and has risen to its defense at the time of an acute political crisis. The "old opposition," seeing him (quite correctly) as immune to "moral terrorism" and able to defend himself energetically and convincingly, did not dare to harass him, while many members of the emerging "new opposition" saw him as one of their principal teachers. He is popular among the students; the best of his own students share and propagate his views. Even *Tygodnik Powszechny* proved remarkably stoical about his change of columns and published a very positive review of his *What is Better than Truth?*

Miroslaw Dzielski, who in a sense was once among Lagowski's disciples, is an equally colorful figure. Unlike Lagowski, he is not a Party member, and has never tried to influence the Party from within; instead, he writes to exert influence on the ecclesiastical establishment, and has already succeeded in becoming a prominent member of the Social Council of the Primate. He is known for his activities in the "new opposition" as the editor of the unofficial "Christian-liberal" periodical *13* (originally *December 13*—an allusion to the date of the imposition of martial law) and the organizer of the unofficial Industrial Society of Cracow. The aim of this strange form of unofficial (hence, formally speaking, underground) activity was to teach Polish private entrepreneurs to understand themselves in a wider civilizational and moral context, and to acquaint them with the ideas of free-market conservatives and libertarians. This was intended to prepare them to treat their enterprises not only as a means of private enrichment, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also as an important part of a program of national revival.[42] Using Marxist terminology, one could say that this was tantamount to transforming petty-bourgeois elements in Poland from a class *in itself* into a class *for itself*. This end was to be achieved constructively as part of the rebuilding of a truly constructive entrepreneurial ethos, badly needed if the necessary economic reform (even a limited one, as envisioned by the liberal wing of the Party) was to succeed. An association with such an aim deserved to be legalized, Dzielski thought, even though its ideology was outspokenly pro-capitalist. For a few years the authorities did not share this view, thus forcing the Industrial Society to act without official recognition. At the end of my visit to Poland the situation changed, though, and the Industrial Society of Cracow was registered as a legally-recognized body. But let us not anticipate events. To understand the full meaning of this seemingly small fact it is necessary to become acquainted with Dzielski's ideas. Happily, the most important of his articles have been collected in his *The Spirit of the Forthcoming Time,* published recently by the underground.

Liberalism from Above

The first article in this collection was published by the underground in April 1980, that is, before the emergence of Solidarity. It is written in the form of a letter to a military officer and deals with the question of how to retain power in People's Poland.[43] The author of the letter presents the officer a realistic conception of reform—realistic, because it takes account of the interests of the people in power: party apparatchiks, officers, security police and militiamen. These interests, he concedes, are incompatible with democracy, but are perfectly compatible with the wholesale reprivatization of the economy. Socialism has become utterly compromised in Poland, and has now very few ideological supporters. Its most numerous and most intelligent supporters are cynics, reasonable people whose only link with ideological madmen is the fear of losing their privileged positions. It is therefore necessary not to antagonize them, but rather to convince them that doing away with socialism could only improve their material situation without depriving them of political control. On the other hand, advocates of reprivatization should realize that their program could be carried out only with the support of a strong, in fact authoritarian government, and that no one is better qualified to form such a government than the present rulers.

Does this mean that Poland will become similar to Chile? No, be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cause repression in Chile must be more severe, to counteract Chile's greater exposure to democratic influences; moreover, in Chile Communism is a real threat to authority, not a tired barrier to change. The Poles do not seriously think about democracy; most of them want only more personal freedom—freedom to buy and sell, to produce, to travel; freedom from arbitrary administrative decisions, i.e., stability in the laws. They have had enough of ideological lies, economic absurdities, and general lawlessness. Thus, the aspirations of the majority are fully compatible with the well-conceived interests of the powerful. The latter, for their part, should realize that embarking on a course of radical reform, a true revolution from above, is the only way of saving themselves from a popular explosion followed by a general catastrophe. In other words, the army officers, the apparatchiks and police functionaries should in their own interest assume the role of radical reformers, doing away with socialism. They are uniquely qualified to do the job because the only alternative is a neo-socialist, utopian revolution, carried out by the masses, aimed at restoring the purity of socialist principles through democratization, and thus destroying the existing political elite without solving any genuine problems.

The author of the letter, obviously an intellectual, concludes therefore that the only hope for Poland is a revolution from above, carried out in the name of efficiency and legal justice, not in the name of equality and social justice. Such a revolution would greatly increase the sphere of individual freedom without introducing political freedom; it would thus promote the cause of liberalism without promoting the cause of democracy. Democratization would be the next step, possible only after about 30 years of economic freedom under the protection of an authoritarian political structure.

And what about the Russians? The author says that this problem must be solved by the present Polish rulers alone, without his help. He expresses the hope, however, that a combination of non-socialist freedom with an authoritarian political regime would be more palatable to the Russians than would socialist democracy. And, after all, Russia also faces the necessity of a radical, systemic economic liberalization. Perhaps the solution proposed for Poland could be applicable to Russia as well.

In other articles written before the creation of Solidarity, Dzielski develops this program without using the mask of a fictitious author. He proposes a distinction between the system and the political elite, as well as between ideological and purely pragmatic compromises, by taking into account the human interests of the ruling groups. The system and its legitimizing ideology are for him real enemies while the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ruling strata are perceived as no longer confident in the superiority of the system, hence lacking faith in the legitimacy of their own power; they seek only to secure their individual and group interests, and are therefore strongly motivated to conduct a policy of compromise.[44] Hating the ruling elite would, moreover, contradict the Christian virtue of forgiveness.[45] And it would be counterproductive, as it would antagonize them unnecessarily, thus increasing their fears and thereby their resistance. True, they will not change their ways without pressure from below, without constant confrontations. Such confrontations, however, should be "soft," aimed at genuine compromise, educating the rulers, teaching them what to do, but giving them a chance of saving face and protecting their human interests.[46] The method of "soft confrontation" should not aim at immediate democratization, since such a demand would automatically create political conflicts. This would be premature and harmful, since democracy is the upper story of the edifice of freedom, and no edifice can be built from the top.

During the Solidarity revolution, Dzielski decided to join the popular movement. He became an expert on the Workers' Committee in the Lenin Steelworks, and the Press Spokesman for Solidarity in the Cracow region. Asked to comment on how his activities could be explained in the light of his ideas, he frankly confessed that initially the stormy character of events took him by surprise, and caused him to revise his views. Soon, however, he began to revert to those views and to propagate them within Solidarity. He warned Solidarity against engaging in the struggle for political freedom, stressing that freedom is not synonymous with democracy, and proposed as an alternative program "the struggle for freedom": a program concentrating on the economy. By this he meant, of course, the struggle against economic absurdities, but he did not expect too much from governmental reforms, seeing them as necessarily half-hearted and inconsistent. He was equally skeptical about the idea of Solidarity's participation in control over the economy: such an arrangement, he argued, would simply add trade union power to that of the government, leaving no place for economic freedom. He recommended instead a program for creating independent private enterprises, including workers' cooperatives, whose constructive work would ease Poland's economic problems and thereby convince the government of the advantages of a radical enlargement of the private sector.[47] In a few years, Dzielski predicted, the Soviet Union would have to carry out genuine economic reforms.[48] This would create conditions for a more radical systemic change in Poland.

The imposition of martial law on December 13, 1981, could be seen

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as the final bankruptcy of the communist partocracy, and a long step towards replacing it with a non-ideological authoritarian regime. Dzielski seems to have shared these hopes; at any rate, he then decided to start publishing *December 13*. He was, however, aware of the complexities of the situation and thus criticized Mikke (whom he otherwise greatly admired) for a lack of patience, as well as for a lack of scruples in criticizing the interned leaders of Solidarity.[49] He did not share Mikke's hope that Poland's military leaders would suddenly reveal their anti-communist feelings, and thereby secure for themselves a measure of popular support. But he too became more explicit in criticizing Solidarity, both for its political militancy and for its socialist illusions. Solidarity members, he claimed, hated the ruling minority, not the system, and dreamed of getting rid of it with the help of the Soviet Union.[50] This reflected the socialist mentality of the average Pole—a phenomenon perfectly compatible with hating "the Reds." From the liberal point of view, however, the socialist mentality—not the police!—is the greatest enemy of individual freedom.[51] Seeing freedom as endangered mostly by the police is a typical example of false consciousness, helping to keep socialist illusions alive and flourishing.

Constructivistic Anti-Communism

Among the themes which appeared in Dzielski's writings after the imposition of martial law the following seem to be especially important. First: opposition between destructive, revolutionary anti-Communism and constructive, *creative* anti-Communism.[52] This was Dzielski's reaction to the revival of the anti-Communist crusade in the United States, which used the events in Poland as a pretext. Militant anti-Communism, Dzielski argues, can serve the interests of the U. S. as a great power, but not the interests of Poland. Thus, for instance, the "Afghanization" of Poland, i.e., making it the theater of a bloody guerilla war, might help America in its military rivalry with the Soviet Union, but could in no way be justified from the perspective of Polish interests. Some Polish émigrés, like Jerzy Giedroyc, the editor of the Paris *Kultura,* might wish for such a turn of events, but this only shows that they think in terms of ideological absolutes—exactly like the Communists in their ideological-utopian phase.[53] What is truly needed in the countries ruled by Communists is a *creative* anti-Communism, one capable of distinguishing between Communism and Communists. This creative anti-Communism could struggle against the Com-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

munist system without endangering the vital interests of the Communist elites, and could thereby avoid the risk of war. It should try to combat Communism by exercising a positive civilizing and cultural influence on the Communists, making sure that its aim is to change them, rather than to destroy them. This variety of anti-Communism should thus be sharply distinguished from the obsolete anti-Communism of President Reagan: "While President Reagan wants us not to count on a change in Soviet habits, creative anti-Communism sees the slow improvement of habits, stemming from the gradual increase of economic freedom, as the mainspring of a general progress towards freedom."[54] Such an attitude does not identify struggling against Communism with weakening the Soviet Empire. On the contrary, it proposes to strengthen this Empire by effectively eliminating the sources of its economic weaknesses.[55]

Second: resolute rejection of the view of Poland as a "totalitarian country." I have already dealt with this theme, but it is necessary to stress its importance and relative newness in Dzielski's thought. In the article which gave the title to his book, he soberly points out that in contemporary Poland totalitarianism is condemned by the government no less than by the opposition. This is evident, for instance, in the image of Stalinist totalitarianism in pro-government Polish films, and even in the writings of the otherwise hard-line party leaders.[56] Significantly, he continues to develop this theme in an article devoted to the murder of Father Popieluszko. Making use of Hayek's terminology, he distinguishes between "constructive" and "constructivist," claiming that "anti-totalitarianism" is now typically a "constructivist" attitude. Such an attitude is characterized by dogmatic theorizing and self-imposed ideological blindness.[57] (He mentions in this context the anti-Communist theories of Alain Besançon and their popularity among the "intransigent" Polish intellectuals.)

Finally: the centrality of the Church. At an earlier stage of his activity, Dzielski mentioned Christianity without placing special emphasis on Catholicism, and only in the context of the need to minimize hatreds. In describing his ideological genealogy he mentioned only classical liberals: Alexis de Tocqueville, Lord Acton, John Stuart Mill, Karl Popper and Hayek.[58] What is remarkable is that his book does not contain enthusiastic comments on the importance of electing a Pole to the Papal throne, nor does it cite the positive impact of this event for raising self-confidence and national aspirations in Poland. He must have been impressed by the forceful explosion of popular religiosity, but, as befits a consciously non-populist thinker, he was obviously

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

skeptical about mass emotions, even if they were expressed by crowds gathered under religious banners.[59] His turn towards Catholicism was caused above all by his appreciation of the responsible political conduct of the Church hierarchy[60] —conduct which has enabled the Church to act as a powerful moderator. In the last pages of his book Dzielski contrasted this political wisdom of the established Church with the mythical ideas and irresponsible radicalism of the militant wing of Solidarity. Unlike the Latin American churches, the Polish Church rejected the temptation of a direct commitment to the struggle for radical democracy.[61] Faithful to the spirit of Latin civilization, it chose instead to concentrate on protecting freedom in non-political—or not directly political—spheres of life, and thereby to set limits to political power. This wise choice made it the mainstay of the liberal political culture in Poland—the culture of moderation, rationality and compromise.[62]

This fully explains Dzielski's decision to act under the umbrella of the Church, and to call his periodical an organ of "Christian liberals." Having done this, however, he inevitably faced a new problem: how to reconcile the social teaching of the Church, which emphasizes distributive justice, with his commitment to free-market liberalism and his sympathy towards the American "conservative revolution."[63]

For some time he tried to ignore the social teaching as a non-obligatory part of the Magisterium of the Church, propagating instead the views of Michael Novak and other Catholic thinkers who chose openly to defend capitalist values. But this was possible only before he accepted membership in the Social Council of the Primate. For members of such a body, the social teaching of the Church is a natural and, in a sense, unavoidable frame of reference for discussing social problems. Hence it was inevitable that Dzielski would take this teaching more seriously, accept it as a starting point, and interpret it in his own way and guide it in his own direction. In this manner he started to elaborate a "revisionist" reading of the social teaching. This interpretation stressed subsidiarism (seen as encouraging economic self-reliance), private property as a natural right, and the need for rebuilding the work ethic. The Church is right, Dzielski argues, in emphasizing the dignity of the workers (an allusion to *Laborem exercens*), in treating work as a distinctively human activity, that is, one which needs to be motivated morally, and in condemning hedonistic consumerism. Unfortunately, however, consumerism has been identified with capitalism, while in fact it is a degenerate form of the capitalist spirit. Genuine, uncorrupted capitalism is bound up with asceticism rather than hedonism, with seeking for salvation rather than narrow-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

minded utilitarianism, and, of course, with a religiously motivated work ethic. The social teaching of the Church should therefore cease to be hostile to capitalism; instead, it should treat capitalism as its natural ally, and help to restore its true spirit.

During his visit to Poland John Paul II met the members of the Social Council of the Primate, and used this occasion to speak with Dzielski; I was told that he presented himself as one who had read Dzielski's work.

A few weeks later the Industrial Society of Cracow was finally accorded legal existence. *Tygodnik Powszechny* noted this fact with strong approval, and published an interview with Dzielski and other founders of the newly legalized association.[64] Provocative terminology was consciously abandoned (for instance, the term "capitalism" was replaced with the more neutral-sounding "market economy"), but the aims of the Industrial Society were still formulated with sufficient clarity in this interview. The "Charter of the Private Economic Enterprise," discussed above, was mentioned as the Society's Credo. The private sector of the Polish economy—which employs (if agriculture is included) at least one fourth of working Poles—was singled out as providing its social basis.

Polish Socialism

I am fully aware that this essay may create confusion among those readers who cling to conventional ideas about today's Poland. But conventional ideas about Poland are almost completely groundless. That they are so widespread is testimony more to the vested interests of those who use them for their own political purposes than anything else.

Contemporary Poland is not a "totalitarian" country. It did pass through a brief totalitarian phase, but since at least 1956 its domestic history can be seen as a complicated process of detotalitarianization. To be sure, it is a very difficult process—from the point of view of national aspirations much too slow—and it is dialectical rather than unilinear. It has its setbacks, as well as its leaps forward, with the first caused by regressive tendencies within the system, and the second resulting, as a rule, from more or less violent and remarkably cyclical conflicts. On the whole, however, all setbacks in this process have been partial and relative. In the final analysis, all of them have contributed to the disintegration of the post-totalitarian "partocracy," and to weakening the remaining totalitarian features of the system.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Martial Law in Poland had no resemblance to totalitarian terror. It was a terrible blow to national hopes and to Solidarity's ambitions, but, to be fair, one must concede that it was very mild by world standards, especially if one takes into account the depth of national frustration and the unusually widespread politicization of the masses. The leaders of the opposition were handled with kid gloves; the intellectuals were wooed rather than repressed.[65] The press was allowed to discuss political problems with greater freedom and frankness than ever before, and, most importantly, the opposition was not really crushed—although kept under control, it was still allowed to be bold and aggressive, since repression could only publicize its cause. The government wanted to avoid or, at least, minimize repression, while many opposition leaders consciously tried to provoke it.[66] Reasonable observers of the Polish scene should realize that police repression is relative to political tensions, and that its presence or absence is not the only measure of people's freedom. Pre-war Poland had a worse record of police repression than the Polish People's Republic, although it would be absurd to conclude from this that the former was less free than the latter. Contemporary Poles are indeed suffering from a lack of freedom, but this is not due to violations of human rights as conventionally conceived.

To attempt to explain their plight by invoking totalitarianism is more sophisticated than blaming the police, if only because it seeks to identify *systemic* causes of this lack of freedom. It is nevertheless misleading because totalitarianism, in any distinguishable sense, no longer exists in Poland. The true cause of Poland's suffering lies in the painful contrast between national aspirations, no longer kept under totalitarian control, and the utter hopelessness generated by "really existing socialism." The Poles feel robbed of their freedom because they cannot change the system which condemns them to scandalous inefficiency and growing backwardness, thereby deeply humiliating them and frustrating their ambitions—both individual and national. This system constantly violates their human rights in countless ways: by depriving them of their elementary freedom as producers and consumers; by forcing them to produce in order to "fulfill the plans," plans which can be fulfilled on paper only; through endemic, grotesque shortages of necessary products, which result in a tremendous waste of human energy and time, mocking the freedom to choose of even those who possess money. It humiliates and enrages people through absurd, conspicuous wastefulness in all spheres of economic life. This is coupled with the increasingly cumbersome organization of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

social life, including the most simple services, and the growing impoverishment of the large segments of the population. It has created a situation in which the free market value of one American dollar is more than equivalent to the daily wage of the average Polish worker.

Prof. Jan Szczepanski, the keynote speaker at the third meeting of the Consultative Council on May 18, 1987, described this system as one in which "money is not money. Wages are not wages, and prices are not prices. All three are merely a fiction of the planner."[67] General Jaruzelski has not tried to take issue with these charges; after all, they were levelled against the system, not against himself. This is typical of the situation in Poland, and the mentality of the Polish political elite. Captive minds have disappeared; things are now called by their true names. Intellectual freedom has reemerged. But the other side of this picture is the economic system, whose bureaucratic inertia has become unbearable. The command economy, which was to serve as a means of making people "conscious masters of their collective fate," has lost its revolutionary dynamism, and has ceased to be effectively controlled by political rulers. The latter, in turn, have stopped identifying themselves with it or in any way feeling proud of and responsible for it. The result is the growing alienation of the self-reproducing systemic mechanisms on the one hand, and the growing helplessness of the political authorities, on the other.

Polish liberals can be accused of a certain extremism in praising the free market and in dismissing the merits of mixed economies. But this extremism is a sound reaction against the realities which surround them. They have the merit of clearly defining the situation as the necessary, although unintended, result of the politicization of the economy. They are bitterly aware that the system, although imposed from without, has taken deep roots in Poland, that most Poles have become a part of it, and that as a result placing all the blame on "them"—the government and the Party—can no longer be justified. In keeping with this diagnosis they have launched a remarkably successful campaign for a "moral re-armament"[68] in the name of true intellectual independence, a work ethic, economic rationality, political realism and the liberal culture of compromise. In this manner they are attempting to put an end to the pathological state of affairs in which the energy of their nation is wasted: not only through systemic absurdities, but also through political conflicts which have passed beyond the limits of rationally conceived national interests. It appears that they have already been successful in changing the intellectual climate of Poland.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES

1. Cf. A. Walicki, "The Main Components of the Situation in Poland: 1980–1983," *Politics* (Journal of the Australasian Political Studies Association) 19, no. 1 (May 1984), and A. Walicki, "The Paradoxes of Jaruzelski's Poland," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 26, no. 2 (1985).
2. Hayek wrote: "Liberalism requires that all power, and therefore also that of the majority, be limited. Democracy came to regard current majority opinion as the only criterion of the legitimacy of the powers of government. The difference between the two principles stands out most clearly if we consider their opposites: with democracy it is authoritarian government; with liberalism it is totalitarianism." F. A. Hayek, "Liberalism," in his *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 143.
3. See Stefan Kisielewski's column in *Tygodnik Powszechny* no. 1 (1985), last page.
4. See *ibid.* no. 17 (April 28, 1985), last page.
5. *13. Pismo chrzescijansko-liberalne* (*13, A Christian-Liberal Magazine*) no. 3 (66), (Cracow: March 1987). On the editor of this periodical, M. Dzielski, see below.
6. See *Reforma gospodarcza*. Dodatek specjalny *Rzeczpospolitej* (*Economic Reform*. Special Appendix to *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw: April 1987).
7. Karl Marx, *Capital* (New York: International Publishers, 1984), vol. 1, 81–3.
8. This important meeting took place at Warsaw University on June 5.
9. In the underground periodical *Dwadziescia jeden* (*Twenty-One*) no. 4 (1987): 68–77 and in the Catholic Weekly *Lad* (*Order*) at the end of July.
10. See Jan Szczepanski, "Od diagnoz do dzialan" ("From Diagnoses to Activity"), in the special edition of *Rada Narodowa*, July 3, 1987, containing the proceedings of the Third Meeting of the Consultative Council. Publications of the proceedings of the Consultative Council are exempt from censorship.
11. I refer here to the views of Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Bronislaw Lagowski and Miroslaw Dzielski. See below.
12. "Wiosna nasza!" ("The Spring is Ours!"), *Stanczyk* no. 6 (1987): 5–8.
13. See "U.S. Agrees to Help Poland," *New York Times* (September 28, 1987): 4: "Describing the discussion about Solidarity at the Bush-Jaruzelski meeting today, the State Department official said Warsaw's point of view was that the labor movement would hamper any effort at internal economic change." Soon afterwards it was announced that the fate of the economic reform would be solved through a national referendum in which the population would choose between radical and moderate variants of reform. In this manner the authorities could not lose. If the radical variant won they could claim popular support for their reform policy, while if moderation was chosen, the blame for avoiding radical change

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would be placed on the entire population of Poland. Cf. "Poland Planning a National Poll on Economic Plan," *New York Times* (October 9, 1987): 1.

14. See *Stanczyk* no. 6: 2–4.
15. D. Passent, "Na prawo-patrz!" ("Look to the Right!"), *Polityka* 25, no. 7 (1987): 16.
16. For a long time Stomma's political realism, or "neo-positivism" (an allusion to the nineteenth-century Warsaw "positivists" who advocated the method of "organic work"), was closely associated with *Tygodnik Powszechny*. The events of March 1968 (student demonstrations, followed by a wave of repression and the infamous "anti-Zionist campaign") caused the breakdown of this movement. It was replaced by the so-called "new evolutionism," a political strategy based on the assumption that the evolution of the system can be achieved only through a series of confrontations and through constant organized pressure. The theorists of this new current (Leszek Kolakowski in England and Jacek Kuron in Poland) rejected out-of-hand the view that socialism might evolve through voluntary concessions, and that a dialogue with the political elite might be both desirable and possible. Instead of this they emphasized the necessity of an organized political struggle.

    For a good selection from Stomma's writings see Adam Bromke, *The Meaning and Uses of Polish History* (Boulder: Eastern European Monographs, 1987), 137–150 and 177–184.
17. Two of his articles have been translated and published by Bromke. See *ibid.*, 209–220 and 225–237.
18. I mean by this all groups subscribing to the tenets of "new evolutionism" and to the confrontationist tactics of the radical wing of Solidarity.
19. See Miroslaw Dzielski, *Duch nadchodzacego czasu* (*The Spirit of the Forthcoming Time*) (published underground, probably in Cracow: 1986), 167–9.
20. Pawel Spiewak, "Czas polityki?" ("The Time of Politics?"), *Res publica* no. 1 (June 1987): 24–7.
21. Macierewicz's position on this point is somewhat different. He accepts the view that the opposition should be guided by the national interest, but insists that members of the ruling elite are still, as a rule, prisoners of their ideological dogmas. There is some truth in this, because in many cases de-ideologization means not the disappearance of ideology, but rather its dilution. The diluted ideology might be remarkably eclectic, unorthodox and flexible, but still unable to reject certain cardinal tenets. This position is characteristic of those Party members who try to avoid dogmatism, yet who are at the same time afraid of falling into cynicism. Jaruzelski's interview with the Yugoslav journalist Zrnka Novak is a perfect manifestation of this mentality. (See *Wywiad Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego dla Zrnki Novak* [Warsaw: Ksiazkai Wiedza, 1987]).
22. The impact of Marxism on *Laborem Exercens* is analyzed sympathetically in Gregory Baum's *The Priority of Labor* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

23. See above, n16.
24. The best critical assessment of the "Cracow school" from a perspective close to the Solidarity underground is B. Wildstein, "Krakowska szkola liberalow," *Kontakt* (Paris: October 1983).
25. A keen awareness of the need for marketization has created the possibility of a strange alliance between "open Marxists" and liberals which, in turn, has caused an increase in interest among the former in liberal theories. Owing to this, my article "Marx and Freedom" (*New York Review of Books* 30, no. 18 [November 24, 1983])—an article containing a liberal critique of Marxism—was translated into Polish and published in the Marxist *Zdanie* no. 2 (1984): 27–34.
26. Bronislaw Lagowski, *Co jest lepsze od prawdy?* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986).
27. *Ibid.*, 169–170.
28. *Ibid.*, 170.
29. In an article published in *Polityka* before the military takeover (A. Walicki, "Towards Mediocrity," *Polityka* [July 4, 1981]) I tried to criticize "vulgar socialism" in Solidarity and in the Party pointing out, among other things, that egalitarianism was foreign to Marx. I fully agree, however, that Marxism has become in Poland a powerful support for vulgar socialist thinking.

    It is worth mentioning that I wanted originally to publish this article in *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* (*Solidarity Weekly*), but that its editors refused to accept it.
30. Lagowski, 172.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, 175.
33. *Ibid.*, 179–181.
34. *Ibid.*, 185. Lagowski used even stronger words: the state, he said, should "protect hard-working people against the jealousy of the mob" (*ibid.*).
35. *Ibid.*, 198.
36. *Ibid.*, 201, 208.
37. Leszek Kolakowski developed this view in his book *Obecnosc mitu* (*The Presence of Myth*) (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1972).
38. Lagowski, 157.
39. *Ibid.*, 205.
40. *Ibid.*, 224–5.
41. Bronislaw Lagowski, "Nie bojcie sig konkurencji," *Zdanie* no. 1 (1987), 5–13. Milosz wrote about the "ontological evil" of capitalism in his article "Szlachetnosc, niestety" ("Nobleness, Alas"), *Kultura* no. 9 (Paris: 1984): 10.
42. I was pleased to find that two of my own writings had been selected by Dzielski for this educational purpose: my criticism of Alvin W. Gouldner (A. Walicki, "Low Marx," *New York Review of Books* [April 25, 1985], published in Polish in *13* [July 8, 1985]) and my article on three traditions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in Polish patriotism, published in the Polish émigré quarterly *Aneks* no. 40 (London: 1985) and reprinted by Dzielski as a separate brochure.

43. Mirosław Dzielski, *Duch nadchodzacego czasu*, 1–16.
44. *Ibid.*, 26–7. Dzielski's conditions for such a compromise are briefly stated in the formula: "Preserve your power but give up Communism" (29).
45. *Ibid.*, 28–9.
46. *Ibid.*, 31. This theory of "soft confrontations" is a sort of a middle way between Stomma's "neo-positivism" and the standpoint of "new evolutionism" (cf. n16).
47. *Ibid.*, 64–6.
48. *Ibid.*, 63.
49. *Ibid.*, 74–80.
50. *Ibid.*, 97. The article in which Dzielski set forth this critique of Solidarity was reprinted in the émigré monthly *Kontakt* (Paris: October 1983), 16–19. In spite of their commitment to Solidarity, the editors of *Kontakt* did not question Dzielski's statement that some of Solidarity's leaders saw the Soviet Union as a possible ally.
51. *Ibid.*, 98.
52. *Ibid.*, 130–4.
53. *Ibid.*, 129.
54. *Ibid.*, 137.
55. *Ibid.*, 137–8.
56. *Ibid.*, 176.
57. *Ibid.*, 218.
58. *Ibid.*, 43.
59. Catholicism, he wrote, "is not a banner leading the faithful to struggle against the enemy. On the contrary, it is a moral imperative which demands that you see in your enemy a human being" (*ibid.*, 191).
60. *Ibid.*, 287–8.
61. *Ibid.*, 289.
62. *Ibid.*, 288.
63. It is necessary to remember that Dzielski was never concerned exclusively with the economy. He is concerned, above all, with the demoralizing influence of the welfare state in shaping one's attitudes towards oneself and toward others. In this context he deals with the "splendid book" by Thomas Sowell, *The Economics and Politics of Race* in *ibid.*, 238.
64. "Miejsce dla przedsiebiorczosci" ("Place For Entrepreneurship"). Interview with the Founders of the Cracow Industrial Society, *Tygodnik Powszechny* no. 31 (August 2, 1987).
65. For an analysis of the cultural policy of the regime see my "The Paradoxes of Jaruzelski's Poland."
66. "The radicals, having quickly learned how beneficial to their interests government overreaction was, developed elaborate techniques of 'provocation,' that is, of baiting the police into brutality as a means of gaining public sympathy for themselves and their cause" (Richard Pipes, *Russia*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Under the Old Regime [London: Harmondsworth, 1984], 275). These words describe the conduct of nineteenth-century Russian radicals. Happily, Jaruzelski's government dealt with similar situations much more wisely, as a rule, than did the Tsarist regime in Russia.

67. Szczepanski, 6.
68. See Dzielski's article "Przezbrojenie moralne" ("Moral Re-Armament") in *Duch*, 111–120.

* * *

Soon after the completion of this essay, on November 29, 1987, the government's program of economic and political reforms was defeated in a national referendum. Although radical economic change was supported by a majority of those who voted, they represented only 44 percent of eligible voters, not the majority that was required. (Political change, or "deep democratization," gained the approval of 46 percent.) This confirmed spectacularly the Polish liberals' view that average Poles are less likely to support radical marketization than many within the political elite.

Although this was a defeat for the likes of Messner and Sadowski, the government as a whole need not worry. After all, most of those who voted supported reform; the views of those who supported Solidarity's boycott of the referendum remain unknown; and the failure of the proposals to gain an absolute majority provides a convenient excuse for avoiding risky decisions. The present policy of half-measures can continue and can be blamed on society rather than its rulers.

Yet the referendum also makes clear the choice between radical economic reforms—and the austerity program bound up with them—and the interests of the average workers in the badly functioning state-owned industries. This choice has helped rehabilitate the term "socialism," and some in the opposition have raised the historical banner of the Polish Socialist Party (*New York Times*, January 2, 1988: 3). The main figure in this emerging group is Jan Jósef Lipski, a founder of KOR and a follower of the Polish anarcho-syndicalist thinker Edward Abramowski (1868–1918). A spokesman for the new party accused the government of trying to streamline the economy at the expense of the workers and stressed that economic restructuring cannot be done "in a Thatcherite way. . . . Our society in a profound way of thinking is socialist. We are used to many forms of social security."

In light of these developments, the government vs. society dichotomy becomes even less tenable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jeremy Shearmur

HABERMAS: A CRITICAL APPROACH*

It was, if my memory serves me correctly, during 1970 when I and several other members of the Department of Philosophy of the London School of Economics went up to London University's Senate House in order to hear a public lecture by Jürgen Habermas. Most of us knew him only by reputation—as the youngest spokesman of the Frankfurt school. We understood him to be going to talk about current Anglo-American philosophy. My only preparation for what would be said was a knowledge of Marcuse's diatribes against this tradition in his *One Dimensional Man*.

I was somewhat taken aback to find that, rather than a fiery critique conducted from the perspective of a Hegelianized Marxism, we were offered an over-long and rather dull treatment of aspects of J. L. Austin's philosophy of language. They were delivered by an almost archetypal German academic with a slight speech impediment, in lightly ac-

*I would like to thank the editor of CRITICAL REVIEW, and also my colleagues Tom Palmer and Sheldon Richman, for many useful suggestions about the style of this piece, and David Ingram's *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Rick Roderick's *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); and the essays by various authors in Richard Bernstein's collection, *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1985) for many useful suggestions about the interpretation of Habermas's views. In each case, the usual disclaimers apply. I hope to return to some of the more distinctive theses of these volumes in the course of a review of Seyla Benhabib's *Critique, Norm and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) which will appear in a future issue of CRITICAL REVIEW.

Jeremy Shearmur is Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University. © 1988, J. F. G. Shearmur.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cented English. At the end of all this, however, our dogmatic slumbers were stirred by Habermas's concluding with a few rhetorical flourishes in which—to at least my surprise, and in a manner that seemed scarcely related to the subject-matter of the talk—radical-sounding conclusions were drawn, before the speaker sat down to polite applause.

Today, Habermas is the subject of an ever-growing pile of books and articles. Habermas himself has written at great length, and he is almost encyclopedic in his interests. His thought is developed in the course of a continuing critical encounter with the ideas of many of the most important figures in philosophy and social theory of the last two centuries. All this is given a special frisson because of Habermas's connection with the Frankfurt school.

The leading figures of the older Frankfurt school—such as Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse—passed disapproving judgment upon much of the modern world, and many tendencies in its intellectual life. They particularly repudiated what they saw as its major intellectual addictions: scientism, subjectivism, and a merely instrumental conception of rationality. In their own eyes, they appeared as champions of Reason in a world in which all that was left of philosophy was an imperialistic philosophy of science, and a "decisionism" which limited the role of reason to the choice between "given" ends—ends which, in the view of the Frankfurt school, were in fact being dictated ever more completely by the institutions of an advanced capitalist society.

The full character of the Frankfurt school's own theoretical presuppositions was never made completely explicit in their writings. And no clear case was set out as to why one should assume their perspective to be correct. They combined an aesthetic cultural elitism, a materialist and "social" reading of psychoanalysis,[1] a left-Hegelian reinterpretation of Marx (from which the working class was expunged, as addicted to its chains), and Weberian historical pessimism. Indeed, *not* explicating a positive theory and *not* pausing to justify themselves to philistines and intellectual pedestrians was almost part of the game. To demand such an explanation was virtually to reveal oneself as a representative of the *petit bourgeoisie*.

Emancipation and Knowledge

One reason why many people found Habermas's work interesting was that he seemed to promise a critique of modern society and of modern thought close to that of the older Frankfurt school, but developed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

upon a basis that was not as obviously tendentious. For rather than some covert appeal to a dogmatically assumed Marxian or Hegelian perspective, Habermas worked through an internal critique of modern thought.

Rather than, say, repudiating the philosophy of science, he attempted to give credit where credit was due, but to put it in its place. Thus, rather than decrying the claims of scientific knowledge (social or natural) and denouncing contemporary work in the philosophy of science, he argued that science was giving us knowledge from a particular perspective; knowledge shaped by interests of a certain kind: technical interests in prediction and control. The philosophy of science, rather than being co-extensive with epistemology, was limited in its scope. Insofar as it made global claims, it misunderstood its own status.

Just what these ideas of Habermas's amount to if taken as a contribution to the philosophy of science was never made clear. It was not that Habermas championed an instrumentalistic (as opposed to a realistic) understanding of the character of scientific knowledge. This was not a dispute with which he was directly concerned. Rather, the force of Habermas's claim lay in other directions. First, in limiting the scope of science, Habermas wished to argue that there are other knowledge-constituting interests, one of which is an interest in understanding and communication. He was, by this means, able to combat the specter of scientism by calling on the tradition of hermeneutics and *Verstehen* (in his treatment of which he emphasized the themes of communication and the inter-subjectivity of knowledge). To this, however, Habermas also added a *further* knowledge-constituting interest—the emancipatory.

Here, he was concerned with themes from Marxism and psychoanalysis—and also that aspect of the thought of the Enlightenment which is captured by Kant's description, offered in his "What is Enlightenment":

> Enlightenment is the emancipation of man from a state of self-imposed tutelage. This state is due to his incapacity to use his own intelligence without external guidance. Such a state of tutelage I call "self-imposed" if it is due not to a lack of intelligence, but to a lack of courage or determination to use his own intelligence without the help of a leader. . . . Dare to use your own intelligence! This is the battle-cry of the Enlightenment.[2]

There was in Habermas's conception of an emancipatory interest, however, an ambiguity that has troubled several of his critics. For

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there are different ways in which the idea of emancipation through knowledge might be interpreted. It might be understood in terms of the idea that the truth shall make us free: that, once we have understood the character of those things which bind us, they bind us no more. Alternatively, it might be the case that, once we have understood their character and the role that they play, we have then actively to cast them off—provided that we in fact wish to do so. (This is an issue to which I will return.) A further ambiguity is added by the fact that Habermas's concern at times seems less to be with obstacles to human knowledge that might be overcome than with something closer to a Kantian conception of a critique: with the exploration of different forms of understanding, and of the intrinsic limits to each of them; limits that *cannot* be overcome. (There are further problems generated by his attempt to give a social interpretation of the Hegelian theme of the historical development of the categories of human reason; but discussion of this would take us into issues that cannot sensibly be pursued here.)

The concerns that I have just outlined led Habermas away from the ideas set out in his *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Before looking at some of his later ideas, I would like to explore a line of criticism of my own, relating to Habermas's notion of an "emancipatory interest."

Consider first the theories from which Habermas draws his notion of an "emancipatory interest." Both Marxism and psychoanalysis make specific and substantive claims about the world. Indeed, the very idea of an "emancipatory interest" is a creature of the assumption that these theories are true: that it is indeed the case that the mechanisms of the human psyche and of human social organization are such that human well-being is best promoted in certain specific ways.

But are such claims true? And by what means are the correctness of these claims to be assessed? On the face of it, it is to the very ideas with which epistemology, the philosophy of science and theories of understanding are concerned that we will need to have recourse. Thus, rather than a distinctive kind of interest here, one has, simply, specific theories, the merits of which must be appraised by just the same means as we appraise the merits of *any* theoretical claims.

What is more, it would seem to me that both Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis are reasonably judged interesting and perhaps suggestive, but false. But what, then, of emancipatory interest?

The proponent of a distinctive emancipatory interest might still say: what of the obvious desirability of the growth of reason and of self-consciousness, and of our ability to free ourselves by becoming con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scious of the character of the fetters that have bound us? What of the Enlightenment, as Kant characterized it; of the desirability of individuals daring to use their own reason?

These ideas are indeed attractive. But they should not be endorsed uncritically as conducive to human well-being—for reasons that Hayek has explained. Hayek argued that it is by allowing "invisible hand" mechanisms to work for us, rather than by demanding in all things the rule of Reason and conscious control, that we can coordinate our activities in ways that allow individuals freedom to use their own judgment and which achieve conditions that are to the advantage of us all. And, similarly, theoretical reflection on our need for complex institutions such as a legal system and a system of social roles may lead us to appreciate that most of us should innovate only in a somewhat circumspect manner. This—Hayek's restatement and development of ideas from Carl Menger and from Ludwig von Mises—is a vitally important theoretical lesson that followers of the Frankfurt school still have to learn from the classical liberal tradition. Once they have done so, the *uncritical* presumption that "emancipation" is the path to freedom and progress must be rejected.

Politics from Epistemology

In Habermas's more recent work, he has moved away from his earlier theory of human interests to ideas closer to Kant's division between factual knowledge, morality and aesthetics. But running through all his work is a deepening of his idea of political ideals being implicit within the notion of communication.

To depict adequately what Habermas does with this theme would take me far beyond the confines of the present piece. Indeed, to engage with his ideas in any detail would virtually require a book-length study. Rather than offering a compressed version of such a study, I will instead present some very tentative reactions to this phase in Habermas's enterprise.

I am concerned here with two aspects of Habermas's work. First, there is his enterprise of extracting values, and, indeed, political ideals from the notion of communication. Second, there is the way in which he seems, somewhat uneasily, to combine empirical and transcendental analysis—moving from specific theories such as those of Piaget and Chomsky to what at times is presented as if it were an analysis grounded in the very possibility of communication itself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I suspect that, at bottom, what Habermas is offering is best understood as a variation on a theme in Kantian epistemology, and an exercise in metaphysics.

The Kantian theme is the one set out towards the end of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Here Kant suggests that one may take inter-subjective agreement as a kind of surrogate for objectivity:

> The holding of a thing to be true is an occurrence in our understanding which, though it may rest upon objective grounds, also requires subjective causes in the mind of the individual who makes the judgment. If the judgment is valid for everyone, provided only he is in possession of reason, its ground is objectively sufficient, and the holding of it to be true is entitled *conviction* . . . truth depends upon agreement with the object, and in respect of it the judgments of each and every understanding must therefore be in agreement with each other. . . . The touchstone whereby we decide whether our holding a thing to be true is a conviction or mere persuasion is therefore external, namely, the possibility of communicating it and of finding it to be valid for all human reason. For there is then at least a presumption that the ground of the agreement of all judgments with each other notwithstanding the differing characters of individuals, rests upon the common ground, namely, upon the object, and that it is for this reason that they are all in agreement with the object—the truth of the judgment being thereby proved.[3]

Such an approach is interesting as a theory of knowledge. Indeed, Karl Popper's theory of the "empirical basis" of knowledge, in his *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*,[4] is a development of just this idea. On Popper's account, the foundations of knowledge—that against which we test any empirical claim—consist of an open-ended inter-subjective consensus as to what is the case.

It is also striking that from such a conception one can easily generate ethical-looking imperatives. Thus, if one's concern is with truth, and if one's epistemology is such that one believes that an uncoerced consensus is the means through which truth claims should be appraised, then from one's concern for truth there is generated an interest in individuals' not being coerced—in the sense of not being under the domination of others.

Such an analysis is consequentialist, in that what matters for such a purpose is the consequences of human actions, not human intentions. What matters from the point of view of epistemology are the situations in which people find themselves, not whether those situations were brought about through voluntary transactions. It also generates a theory of ideology.[5] For in principle, it becomes possible to criticize an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

existing social consensus on the basis of the kinds of social and economic arrangements that legitimated it (in the sense of suppressing criticism of it). Thus if, say, women are not allowed a voice—if their criticisms cannot be expressed—the fact that there is no disagreement is not grounds for a presumption that the ideas in question are true. Similarly, one might tentatively explain certain features of a consensus in terms of the kinds of criticism to which it was *not* open.

The approach may also be extended beyond the realm of factual argument, to moral issues, and perhaps even aesthetic issues too—although in these areas, one must, presumably, allow for a greater amount of pluralism than would seem appropriate in respect of our judgments about matters of fact.

These ideas—of which, it seems to me, Popper's epistemology gives us a particularly interesting model—are one way in which we can make sense of Habermas's approach. But why have I developed this as an extension of a specific epistemology, rather than following Habermas into presenting these ideas as implicit in communication *per se?* It is because such conclusions only follow if a particular epistemology is correct. If, instead, some form of epistemological elitism were correct, then every move in the direction of the social arrangements suggested by our earlier argument would be a step away from those conditions which would be productive of truth.[6] Habermas's way of presenting things gives a false generality to his argument. In addition, it obscures the fact that Habermas needs to explicate and defend an epistemology, not just in respect of matters of fact, but also of ethical judgment, if his approach is to be plausible.

From this perspective, the other side of Habermas's enterprise—presented as a somewhat uneasy cross between scientific naturalism and transcendental argument—also becomes more comprehensible. It may be understood as an exercise in scientific metaphysics—that is to say, as what happens if we take our current (and admittedly tentative) scientific knowledge as giving us a picture of the world that can be interpreted realistically, and can then be used by us in our task of seeking to understand ourselves and our interactions with the world.

Which Politics From Epistemology?

If, however, one were to accept the epistemologically-based argument that I have sketched above, what follows at a political level? Habermas is in my view completely right to suggest that one can offer an epis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

temologically-generated critique of our social institutions. But what is the force—and the character—of that critique?

Its force is less than Habermas's approach might suggest. For such a critique is generated from our concern for truth, and for validity in our moral claims. But these are not our only concerns. And while it seems to me reasonable to take the view that it is only those interests of individuals which are, in some sense, appropriate or rational that should be accorded any normative clout by others, it is nonetheless the case that even these interests may conflict with our concern for truth. For example, we might discover that our current social practices have features that conflict in some marginal way with the ideal conditions for dialogue, but which it would be extremely burdensome to change. In such situations, there would not likely be any disagreement that our non-cognitive interests should triumph. It was for this reason that I earlier suggested that the link between our recognizing something to be an intellectual fetter and our wishing to remove it was not immediate. For we may correctly judge that it is to our advantage to keep things the way they are.

In what direction, politically, do the arguments that we can extract from our epistemological concerns lead? It seems to me that in Habermas and among his commentators there is a largely unargued presumption that they lead towards collective democratic decision-making, and beyond that to some form of socialism.[7]

But insofar as they take this view, I think that they are incorrect. For if we consider what in social and economic terms will provide the best safeguards for autonomy of judgment, then there is a strong case for private property rights, in the sense stressed by the classical liberal tradition. To be sure, there will be inequalities in property-holdings. But there is every reason to suppose that property will not be in the hands of those who hold just one view, and that we will stand a better chance for a diversity of views to be represented and heard than would be the case if resources were collectively held, or distributed through the processes of a majoritarian democracy. It is also important that we do not here contrast the arrangements that are likely under a liberal economic system with a mere ideal. Instead we must conduct an exercise in comparative socio-economic systems, viewing how each of them functions in realistic terms. Here it would seem to me plausible that the actual working of either "planned" economies, or even of pluralist democracies where decision-making is extensively politicized, are less supportive of individual autonomy and diversity in opinion than is a market-based social and political order.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Moreover, it it misleading to think of politics in terms of actual dialogue. For such dialogue is of a face-to-face character, while the kinds of society in which most of us wish to live are large, and depend on the division of labor and upon cooperation with many people with whom we *cannot* have face-to-face relationships, and, thus, dialogue. It simply is not the case that one can treat of politics as if it were like the deliberations of an ideal epistemological community. (To treat it in this way is to raise from the grave, once again, the specter of the *polis*-sized political community which has done so much damage through the history of Western political thought.) What is more, in ethics and politics, and in most of the things that matter to us, we are faced with a diversity of ideals and traditions which in practice generate disagreement and limits to consensus.

In such situations of disagreement, everything is to be gained from continued dialogue. But a model of democracy that demands consensus upon more than (1) the most general procedural requirements and (2) what constitutes an unacceptable situation, is making demands that are unrealistic. While I find "communitarian" writing both unattractive and unconvincing,[8] those writing in this vein are surely correct in stressing the diversity of actual moral and political traditions—and thus the depth of the problem facing those who picture politics as dialogue to consensus.

In the face of this diversity, it seems to me that the most plausible path for an approach like that of Habermas is, in the end, to endorse a view in which limited dialogue about general principles and minimal conditions of well-being is supplemented by the freedom of individuals to engage in experiments in living (subject, perhaps, to a requirement to face criticisms and objections to their chosen form of life). In this way, from epistemological concerns like those of Habermas or of Popper one generates not socialism or an expansive conception of democracy, but a conception of the proper scope of democracy as limited to issues of general principle (and perhaps the determination of minimal standards of life below which, if otherwise unassisted, citizens are regarded as entitled to collective assistance).

Indeed, one can take this argument further in the direction of classical liberalism. For an epistemologically generated conception of rights—what one might call "dialogue rights"—may be extended to justify individual property rights. Property may be regarded as a vehicle for the objectification of judgment—as a means by which we may learn, not least through experiments in living.[9]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Capitalism and Utopia

Habermas does not take the view that dialogue is everything. As Albrecht Wellmer brings out in an essay entitled "Reason, Utopia and Enlightenment",[10] Habermas sees communication—the ideas with which we have been concerned above—as complementary to issues of systematic rationalization and economic and bureaucratic organization. In Habermas's view, the problems that the older Frankfurt school discerned in the social world are not necessary, but, rather, the product of particular historical developments which place restrictions on communication.

But what, then, is to be done—what, for Habermas, will a world in which communication plays its proper role look like? Just what, as Wellmer puts it,

> [would] on the one hand . . . represent the normative anchoring of the [social and economic] system in the life-world, and, on the other, would protect the communicative structures of the life-world themselves and secure a rational and democratic control of the system by the life-world?

Wellmer continues:

> Habermas does not try to answer the question how such institutional structures would look in a post-capitalist society. This is quite consistent with his general position; it is not the task of the theoretician to determine what the content of a future social consensus will be.[11]

If Wellmer's account is correct, Habermas would seem here to parallel Marx's move of combining a refusal to discuss what an improved society might be like with an uncritical assumption that things will be better if capitalism is superceded.[12] But to take such a view means turning one's back on our actual achievements, and on the ways in which we may carefully move to do things better, and offering in their place a utopian fantasy—one which is simply destructive in its practical consequences.

The Dance of the Dead

In most of what I have written so far, I have been sympathetic and respectful towards Habermas's work. Indeed, I think that one can hardly be anything else. I do not agree with the substantive political

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

views that have inspired Habermas's work. I think that the epistemological ideas he has developed lead politically in a direction totally different to that towards which he is inclined. And I think that the turgid character of much of his writing is a scandal. But I nonetheless think that he has tackled problems that should form the object of serious work in normative political theory today—and that this includes the classical liberal tradition.

Habermas is correct in identifying a particular problematic, going back to the Enlightenment, to which those of all intellectual traditions must address themselves. He is also right that this work cannot be done within the confines of single intellectual disciplines as we currently receive them. An exclusive training in any one of these, on its own, simply ensures that one is trained not to be able to understand the real problems we face. One is supplied, instead, with a sophisticated problem-solving apparatus that equips one to focus on issues that are, increasingly, minute, and perhaps merely creatures of the discipline within which one is working. Habermas is also correct that one cannot sensibly divorce normative political theory and the task of trying to make sense of the world.

However, there are other respects in which those who follow Habermas are on completely the wrong track. For at a certain point, the real world seems to disappear. In Marx, views are often articulated via a "critique" of the assumptions of other writers, rather than by actually seeing if what is being asserted is true or false of the world. But such an approach is only tenable from something like a Hegelian perspective. In Habermas and many of his commentators, the actual world likewise drops away. In its place, there are clever and illuminating readings of Weber, of Freud, of Marx, and so on. That Habermas and his followers have such historical and theoretical interests is fine; that they do not show equal interest in the empirical assessment of the truth or the falsity of received accounts, theoretical or historical, seems to me terrible. What is needed is a critical interplay between theory and *real* history, and *real* anthropology, sociology and economics, rather than an elaborate dance of the dead with the Great Thinkers of the Modern Western Tradition.

* * *

The reflections in this short essay are preliminary and programmatic. I have sketched an approach toward the work of Habermas and of those influenced by him which I will develop on another occasion. I have also suggested a program for research within the classical liberal tradition.[13] But however harshly particular arguments that I have of-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fered may be judged, or however it may be felt that I have misunderstood or misrepresented Habermas's concerns, I would hope that this essay may be welcomed as an attempt to open up a dialogue. And that is something to which Habermas can hardly object.

NOTES

1. Cf. Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1977), and also my review in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 13, no. 1 (March 1983).
2. See Kant, "An Answer to the Question 'What is Enlightenment?'" in H. Reiss, ed., *Kant's Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). I have used the translation of this passage to be found in Karl Popper's "Emancipation Through Knowledge" in A. J. Ayer, ed., *The Humanist Outlook* (London: Pemberton Press, 1968).
3. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* II, "Transcendental Doctrine of Method," ch. 2, sec. 3; Kemp-Smith trans. (London: Macmillan, 1964), 645.
4. Cf. K. R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery,* secs. 8 and 30, and his references there to Kant's discussion of objectivity in the *Critique of Pure Reason.*
5. Cf., for a development of such ideas from a "Popperian" starting-point, my "The Religious Sect as a Cognitive System," *Annual Review of the Social Sciences of Religion* 4 (1980); and my "Epistemology Socialized?", *et cetera,* Fall 1985.
6. After writing an initial version of this argument, I discovered that essentially the same point is made in Lecture III of Hilary Putnam's *The Many Faces of Realism* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1987).
7. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews,* ed. Peter Dews (London: Verso, 1986).
8. Not least because they seem simply to presuppose that their communities will be left-liberal in sentiment, tolerant, and will respect the rights of women and of minorities.
9. Cf., on this, my "Abstract Institutions in an Open Society" in *Wittgenstein, the Vienna Circle and Critical Rationalism* (Vienna: HPT, 1979); my University of London Ph.D. dissertation, *The Political Thought of F. A. von Hayek;* and my "From Dialogue Rights to Property Rights," delivered at the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 1987.
10. In Richard J. Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985).
11. *Ibid.,* 56.
12. Cf., on this, my "Popper's Critique of Marxism," CRITICAL REVIEW 1, No. 1 (Winter 1986–87).
13. This I have pursued elsewhere. Cf. the references in note 9.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Hospers

SUBJECTIVE REALITY

THE VIEW FROM NOWHERE
by Thomas Nagel
New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 244 pp., $19.95

Immanuel Kant believed that he encountered insuperable paradoxes when he reflected on the nature of the world: space must be infinite, yet it must also be finite; time must be unending, yet also bounded; science presupposes universal causation, yet human freedom demands release from universal causation. To resolve these paradoxes, which he called antinomies, he concluded that such concepts as space, time, and causation (among others) belong to the realm of appearance only—"the phenomenal world"—and that the real world—"the noumenal world"—is not bound by these distinctions. In doing this, however, he paid a high price: human beings have no conception of the nature of the noumenal realm, and it remains unknowable. It is for this reason that Santayana said that "at the heart of the Kantian system lies the most terrible negation."

Today most of these paradoxes are no longer so puzzling. Non-Euclidean geometries have changed scientists' views about space; and the Big Bang theory envisages, allegedly without paradox, a first moment of time. The problem of determinism and freedom, however, remains as intractable as ever, except to those "compatibilists" who believe that there is no puzzle to be resolved. The contemporary American philosopher Thomas Nagel is troubled by his own set of

John Hospers, a past president of the American Society for Aesthetics, is professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California and author of numerous works, including *Human Conduct, Understanding the Arts* and *Libertarianism*. The third, completely revised edition of his *Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* has just been published by Prentice-Hall.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paradoxes, some of them the same as Kant's. He eschews all the "easy" solutions, nor does he posit a "noumenal world" to resolve his paradoxes. He is willing to admit frankly that in many cases we have no way to resolve them. In every case Nagel discusses, the paradoxes have a common source. I shall consider the main ones.

Reality vs. Reductionism

(1) *The mind-body problem.* It can hardly be denied that people have thoughts, sensations, feelings. These seem to be essentially private—I can't have your thoughts, nor you mine—and not to be locatable in a portion of space, as everything physical is. Since Descartes there has been a continuing controversy about the relation of the mental to the physical: how are they connected with one another in the same organism? Does mind cause changes in matter, and if so how? Can the nonmaterial act on the material? Interactionism, parallelism, and epiphenomenalism have been traditional attempts to solve this problem, and all of them have encountered seemingly insuperable objections. The currently popular view is the Identity Theory—that mental events are identical with brain-processes, just as the morning star and the evening star (once thought to be different celestial bodies) are one and the same object, the planet Venus, or just as temperature is identical with the motion of molecules (this identity too was not always known, but discovered by seventeenth-century physicists), or the president of the Senate is identical with the vice-president of the United States (they are one and the same person).

Much has been written about these identities, and lengthy attempts have been made to put the mind-brain relation in the same boat with the others. But, says Nagel, these are only analogies, and they won't work in the present case. If we have met the vice-president of the United States, we have also met the president of the Senate.(even if we don't know that he holds that office). But it is not necessarily the case that if we know that a certain mental event occurs, such as a thought of Paris, then a certain brain-event (whose nature no one yet knows, if indeed it exists) also occurs; they may as a matter of empirical fact always go together, from which it doesn't follow that they are one and the same thing. Indeed, they cannot be, says Nagel; for if they were they would have the same properties, and mental events have properties that physical ones don't have (they are private to the person who has them), and physical events have properties that mental events don't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(such as spatial extension). That one philosopher after another has made such desperate attempts to "reduce" mental events to physical events (see for example C. V. Borst, ed., *The Mind-Brain Identity Theory*),[1] in spite of the powerful objections to doing so, is a testimony to our currently fashionable "scientism." Science is committed to studying only physical phenomena, and does not rest content until every phenomenon has been incorporated into that category. The close correlation of mental events with brain events has led scientistic philosophers down the tempting but fatal path of trying to make them identical—not identical merely in the sense of being exactly similar (as in "These two marbles are identical"), but in the stronger sense of being literally one and the same thing.

"We cannot directly see a necessary connection, if there is one," writes Nagel (48–9), "between phenomenological pain and a physiologically described brain state any more than we can directly see the necessary connection between increase in temperature and the pressure of a gas at constant volume. In the latter case the necessity of the connection becomes clear only when we descend to the level of molecular description: till then it appears as a contingent correlation. In the psycho-physical case, we have no idea whether there is such a deeper level or what it could be." Even if there is, he adds, this would not succeed in reducing the mental event to the brain state, for they have different properties, and things with different properties cannot be one and the same thing.

"To insist on trying to explain the mind in terms of concepts and theories that have been devised exclusively to explain non-mental phenomena," says Nagel (52), "is, in view of the radically distinguishing characteristics of the mental, both intellectually backward and scientifically suicidal. The difference between mental and physical is far greater than the difference between electrical and mechanical." What trying to "reduce the mental to the physical" leaves out entirely is the unique character of the *experience* of having thoughts and feelings. These are experiences that are *lived through,* and science can never tell us what it is for this to occur. It can give us the chemical formula for ammonia, but it cannot convey to us the unique quality of its pungent smell. It can tell us that pain occurs when C-fibers in the brain are stimulated, but it cannot tell us what the peculiar experience called pain *feels like.*

The first of those phenomena belong to the "objective" realm, the realm of publicly verifiable events and processes ongoing in nature and studied by the sciences; the second belong to the "subjective," the way

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something feels or appears to the living and perceiving subject. Both occur, and neither can be dispensed with.

Of their exact relation, however, we have no conception. "In some way that we do not now understand," writes Nagel (51), "our minds as well as our bodies come into being when these materials are suitably combined and organized. The strange truth seems to be that certain complex, biologically generated physical systems, of which each of us is an example, have rich non-physical properties. An integrated theory of reality must account for this, and I believe that if and when it arrives, probably not for centuries, it will alter our conception of the universe as radically as anything to date."

We are left, then, with an unresolved problem, a problem whose solution we cannot presently even imagine. Both the objective and the subjective views must be a part of our total conception of reality, yet we have no idea how they are related to one another, or how the two are to be integrated into one comprehensive conception.

(2) *The physical world.* The same duality reappears when we consider the physical world existing independently of ourselves. We see it as full of shapes and colors, smooth surfaces, fragrant smells, sweet and bitter tastes. This is the world we know "from the subjective point of view," a world rich in sensory qualities, of which painters and poets enrich our appreciation. But it is not, we are told, the "real" world as revealed to us by the sciences. The world of science is a world of atoms and electrons and a multiplicity of strange "particles" indirectly observed (through their effects) by physicists, far too minute to be seen or touched, and too different in their intrinsic character for us even to visualize. The "real world" of science contains no colors or smells or tastes. "Bodies," wrote Alfred North Whitehead, "are perceived as having qualities which in reality do not belong to them, qualities which in fact are purely the offspring of the mind. Thus nature gets credit which should in truth be reserved for ourselves: the rose for its scent; the nightingale for its song; and the sun for its radiance. . . . Nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colorless, merely the hurry of material, endless, meaningless."[2]

This, then, is the scientific world-picture: the way things smell or taste has no part in the scientific account of reality. Physics is concerned with energy and waves and particles in motion, their size, their mass, their momentum, whether they can strike other particles and with what velocity. But "to be red simply *is* the sort of thing that looks or would look red to normal human observers. . . . To be square, on the other hand, is an independent property which can be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

used to explain many things about an object, including how it looks and feels" (Nagel, 75). The physicist studies the world from "the objective point of view," which tells us nothing about how it looks or feels *to us*. Yet the look and feel of things, says Nagel, is as "real" as anything that exists; the rest is an *inference* from what we experience, but this is what we experience *directly,* which would still be with us even if all current physical theory were scrapped tomorrow. The problem, as before, is how to put Humpty-Dumpty together again—to incorporate these two worlds into one worldview—the part that occurs in consciousness and the part that gives us information about the world as it exists apart from consciousness.

But we know of no way to bring these two aspects together. We know nothing about photons of light, for example, which would lead us antecedently to conclude that certain wave-lengths of light should be associated with just that peculiar and indescribable quality we call redness, which is as directly apparent to us as anything could be, yet which is forever unknowable to the blind, even to a blind physicist: no description we could give could ever convey to him the slightest conception of what red looks like.

(3) *Human freedom*. There is nothing of which we are more certain, as a datum of our consciousness during every waking moment, than that we are free: that we deliberate, choose, and act. I control my future, at least part of it, by making the choices that I do. We hold people individually *responsible* for their actions, and to do this we must "vicariously occupy that person's point of view and evaluate his action from within it" (121). Yet when we look upon ourselves as parts of the cosmos, as infinitesimally small specks in the whole world order, our actions, our very lives, are totally insignificant "happenings": we are not agents, initiators of action, but chips on the causal current, mere vehicles by which the totality of influences acting upon us result in outcomes in which we are mere causal links. "*My doing* of an act . . . seems to disappear when we think of the world objectively. There seems to be no room for agency in a world of neural impulses, chemical reactions, and bone and muscle movements. Even if we add sensations, perceptions, and feelings, we don't get action, or doing—there is only what *happens*" (111). "Actions seem no longer assignable to individual agents as sources, but become instead components of the flux of events in the world of which the agent is a part" (110).

We are led by science to assent to the universal causation of events, including human decisions, yet at the same time we continue to believe ourselves to be free and autonomous beings. "What we want is some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing impossible, and the desire for it is evoked precisely by the objective view of ourselves that reveals it to be impossible" (117). The sciences, including psychology, continually expand the terrain in which everything that happens is causally determined. This is the "objective standpoint"—yet "the objective standpoint creates an appetite which it shows to be insatiable" (118). The conflict between the two is real and intense: "When we first consider the possibility that all human actions may be determined by heredity and environment, it threatens to defuse our reactive attitudes as effectively as does the information that a particular action was caused by the effects of a drug" (125).

(4) *The meaning of life.* When I look at my life (in Spinoza's phrase, *sub specie aeternitatis* [under the aspect of eternity]), I am a virtual nothing in the vast history of the cosmos. Almost no one would miss me if I were gone, and certainly no one would have missed me if I had not been born. That I was born at all is a kind of vast cosmic improbability: when one considers the concatenation of millions of conditions that had to be fulfilled for me to exist at all—that my parents existed, and my grandparents before them and so on indefinitely into the past, that my parents happened to meet, that a sperm and an egg combined at a certain time—the chances of my existing at all were vanishingly small. "The natural delusion of my own inevitability collides with the objective fact that *who* exists is radically contingent, my own existence in particular being one of the most inessential things in the world. Almost every possible person has not been born and never will be, and it is sheer accident that I am one of the few who actually made it" (211).

And yet, from the subjective point of view, I am the center of the universe. My goals, activities, and projects revolve around me—not that they need all be directed toward me or my own personal well-being, but that they are uniquely mine (whatever their object) and no one else's. From the subjective point of view I am more important than the stars in the firmament; I at least know that they exist, and they do not. "Finding my life objectively insignificant, I am nevertheless unable to extricate myself from an unqualified commitment to it—to my aspirations and ambitions, my wishes for fulfillment, recognition, understanding, and so forth. The sense of the absurd is the result of this juxtaposition" (218).

I have summarized Nagel's main tenets without comment, partly just to lay them on the table, partly because of a strong general sympathy with them. He has spearheaded a powerful attack on one of the most pervasive tendencies of both science and philosophy, to "reduce

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one thing to another." "If you can't understand mind, then make it physical—that at least is familiar territory." "Science has found that everything is causally determined, so forget about your delusions of freedom." This reductionist tendency has done much harm to human thought, and Nagel provides, in one theme running successively through a series of philosophical issues, a welcome antidote to such reductionism.

It isn't all that simple, of course—nor does Nagel imply that it is; my own presentation has somewhat oversimplified it. Many conceptions of the mind-body relation do not attempt to "reduce" mental to physical but attempt to relate them, however unsatisfactorily (e.g., functionalism: the mental is a function of the physical, but not reducible to it), often in subtle ways, though usually attempting to assign the mental a non-causal role. It is really the Identity Theory, not other mind-body theories, that is the target of Nagel's attack.

Similarly, the Principle of Universal Causation need not be accepted, even by scientists, as a universal truth about nature. Subatomic physics has recently presented us with the spectacle of non-causally-determined events, as in Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy (which need not be interpreted non-causally, but can be). Indeterminacy has become "par for the course" in sub-atomic physics, yet Einstein, believing the alleged indeterminacy to be a defect of our knowledge rather than a feature of nature, contended that "God does not play dice with the universe." And even apart from recent physical theory, there is a lingering suspicion that the Causal Principle is not like a law of nature, because of its peculiar epistemological status: everything whose cause we find apparently confirms the principle further, but failure to find causes is not taken as disconfirming it (we only say "There's a cause, but we haven't found it yet"). But what kind of empirical law is it that can be confirmed but not disconfirmed? This peculiar asymmetry has prompted some philosophers to declare that the Causal Principle, on which psychological determinism is based, is not a truth about the universe at all, but a kind of regulatory principle, a "rule of the game" that is neither true nor false but a kind of guiding beacon to encourage us to investigate further—indeed, that it is not really something that the world reports to us, but something we bring to the world. "Even if you never find a cause, assume there is one anyway" is not exactly a scientific law like the melting point of lead or the boiling point of water at sea level, which would easily be refuted by a single contrary example.

There are, then, numerous attempts to blunt the force of the kind

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of problems raised by Nagel. Yet whatever may be said of these details and their relevance to specific problems, his general approach to the problems is both convincing and refreshing. The world of science contains no sensory qualities; very well, but our lived-in world does, and somehow we must reconcile or combine the two accounts. Even if the Law of Universal Causation is not a true empirical law, it still remains the case that there is a conflict between the "objective view," in which we are the products of powerful determining influences on our lives and behavior, and our daily common-sense view of ourselves as autonomous beings, free to make our own decisions and through them to make a difference in the world. Yet we must reckon with both of these points of view. The scientific worldview is not going to cease to be, but neither will our view of ourselves as reflective and creative beings, unlike all the other beings of whom we have knowledge, gleaning information about the world, reflecting, and acting in the light of that information—regardless of the picture of ourselves that science may serve up to us. Each is real in its way, and it may be a "cop-out" to go Kant's route and assign one of them to the realm of unknowable noumena. Nagel at least does not take this route, and faces the issues head-on.

Thus far the tensions generated by the objective-subjective dichotomy have been fairly straightforward. A peculiar twist, however, is given to it in Nagel's treatment of the problems of ethics.

Subjective vs. Objective Ethics

We encounter a similar though more complex duality in our moral judgments. From the subject point of view, says Nagel, I am an agent acting to pursue my ends—which may not be self-interested ends, of course, just the ends that I choose. I have good reason to promote my happiness and well-being and to avoid pain and misery, just as you have reason to promote yours. Everyone is inclined toward such an *agent-relative* ethics. My projects are valuable to me because they are mine; they may be of no value to you, and you have no reason to pursue mine or to assist me in them. On the other hand, there is also a different kind of ethics to which we often appeal: an "objective" ethics in which the agent, the person acting, is only one among countless other persons, and in which each person should view himself or herself as only a tiny part of a vast whole. Such an ethics is utilitarianism. According to Mill, its chief proponent, each person in making choices

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

should permit the probable consequences of his actions upon himself to loom no larger in his calculations than the consequences to each and every other person: he should be as impartial in determining what he should do as a totally disinterested spectator.

These two brands of ethics, of course, are bound to clash. I may pursue my own ends, which may not include you nor even any consideration of you at all. Yet if utilitarianism is granted, I should give up my projects, my welfare, my happiness, my very life, if greater good to all concerned would result from my doing this than from my failing to do it.

As a person trying to succeed and prosper in this world, I have a right to "live well" (at least with non-stolen income), and the "good life" for me may include eating periodically at restaurants whose total cost to me in a year would feed a thousand of the hungry in Bangladesh. Utilitarianism would unhesitatingly say that I should feed the hungry and forego all fancy meals for myself. Yet if I devote my entire life to trying to enable others to live well, I shall not live well myself: I may in fact be miserable spending my life in this way; must I forever be a sacrificial animal on the altar of others' well-being? Should they too be devoted to my well-being, in which case life becomes a series of curtsies and retreats, or should I give my utmost until our economic situation is equalized (which in view of the immensity of their need and numbers, may be never)? If so, then we are constantly living immoral lives; this cannot be required of us. Yet if starvation stalks the land—any land, not just our own—are we justified in going on as if this condition did not exist?

(I cannot refrain from observing in this connection that these "emergency ethics" cases, like the hungry-in-Bangladesh, so often cited by moralists, do not quite have the ring of truth to them, because the dilemmas the writers describe (including Nagel) mention no other alternatives. If we devoted our lives to feeding the hungry, they would be hungry again tomorrow, and the distress we were supposed to relieve would never cease. If we devoted ourselves instead to eradicating the *causes* of poverty, we might quickly discover that there was ever so much less poverty to be relieved. With modern technology, it seems to me that the problem of poverty is virtually obsolete; what is required is political and economic institutions that encourage productivity. But academic writers almost never mention this simple economic point. They take world hunger as a *given,* and the problem as they present it is simply whether to relieve the omnipresent hunger or not.)

The moral situation Nagel envisages is somewhat more complex

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than agent-centered versus utility-centered. I not only have reason, says Nagel, to give preferential attention to my own needs in an agent-centered ethics; I also have reason to give preferential attention to those who are near and dear to me, to father and mother, husband and wife, son and daughter, lover and friend. Indeed, says Nagel, it would be wrong of me *not* to do so, unlike the case of strangers to whom I owe nothing. I have a duty to my father which you do not have, for he is not yours; and you have a duty to yours that I do not have. The duty to care for my children is an agent-relative duty: I do not have it to just anyone's children, but to my own, whom through my voluntary action I helped bring into the world. The utilitarian demands are unswervingly impersonal—to your children as well as to my own; but the moral demands just described are personal, agent-relative. And again the two may come into conflict. If my father and a physician with a cure for cancer in his pocket were both trapped in a burning building and I could rescue only one of them, the utilitarian would not hesitate to say that I should rescue the physician, for thereby much more good would be achieved in the world; but would I not be justified in rescuing my father all the same, not because he has more "objective" worth but only because he is of greater value *to me?* Most parents would willingly give up their own lives to save those of their children, not because of any utilitarian calculation that the good in the world would thereby be maximized, but simply because in their own hierarchy of values their own children come first—the neighbors' children would not and should not. It is the personal relation to the agent that makes the difference.

In the case of ethics, Nagel does make some moves to attempt a reconciliation between the two points of view, though not everyone will agree with the specific moves that he makes. Pleasure and pain, he says, are among the most elemental human experiences, and human beings can and usually do recognize an obligation not to cause pain to others, and in fact to relieve it if they can. "Each of us has reason to give significant weight to the simple sensory pleasure or pain of others as well as to his own" (166). I have reason to relieve your pain if I can, as well as my own: pains are intrinsically bad experiences which it is among our most elementary duties to minimize. But this obligation on my part does not extend to other aspects of your life. If you want badly to climb Mt. Everest, *you* have a reason to exert yourself in this Herculean attempt, but *I* have no particular reason to assist you or even to want you to succeed. If I want to become a famous pianist, I have reason to practice many hours a day, but *you* have no particular

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reason to help me in this endeavor or even desire my success. And this is so, says Nagel, even if you may want to climb Mt. Everest more than you want to avoid pain (167). I have no particular reason to get hooked into your specific projects or ideals—as I would in utilitarianism if your project were more good-producing than mine. But pleasure and pain are universal experiences, and the prevention of pain, unlike the other case, is (as in utilitarianism) an "objectively based" obligation which is independent of my *desire* to ease your pain. Such an obligation can in fact be quite demanding: "If you and a stranger have both been injured, you have one dose of painkiller, and his pain is much more severe than yours, you should give him the painkiller—not for any complicated reasons, but simply because of the relative severity of the two pains, which provides a neutral reason to prefer the relief of the more severe" (166–7).

This is certainly a move toward the impersonal stance of utilitarianism. Yet it does not collapse into utilitarianism, as the following example illustrates. Suppose that I can save the lives of five persons only by inflicting torture on one person (e.g., to glean the information that will enable me to save the five lives). It is not obvious, as it is in utilitarianism, that I should go ahead with the torture in order to save the lives. I did not cause the five people to be in the situation in which they find themselves; but I do cause any torture I inflict, it is something that I *do*. I through my action will have directly caused intense pain to another human being; I would be the agent in causing this evil in a way I would not be causing it if I did not inflict it, even though the result of not inflicting it would be that the five innocent persons would die. The Biblical injunction, "Never do evil that good may come," reflects a strong moral conviction. It is not merely that the evil you now commit is certain, whereas the subsequent saving of lives is less certain to occur (though it is probable); it is rather the very personal consideration that *I* would be the person consciously and knowingly inflicting it. There is a difference between an evil that I *do* and an evil that *occurs* unwilled and unchosen by me.

We have, then, a peculiar combination of "objective" reasons (*sub specie aeternitatis,* the world would be a better place if I did X) with "subjective" reasons (the infliction of torture, even to save lives, would be *my* act, my initiation of evil). For similar reasons, we should refrain from deceit and betrayal, even though in a particular case the total good to all concerned might be maximized if I engage in them (e.g., by deceiving you I may ease your mind). There are similar "restrictions against lying and betrayal; the prohibitions against violating

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

various individual rights, rights not to be killed, injured, imprisoned, threatened, tortured, coerced, robbed; the restrictions against imposing certain sacrifices on someone simply as a means to an end; and perhaps the special claim of immediacy, which makes distress at a distance so different from distress in the same room" (176). "In all these cases it appears that the special reasons . . . cannot be explained simply in terms of neutral values, because the particular relation of the agent to the outcome is essential."

Nagel appeals to our shared moral intuitions here, rather than attempting to argue in favor of his position. One wonders, accordingly, how he would attempt to rebut other "reconciliatory" positions, for example that one should help one's parents only if they have been good parents, or that personal projects are as important as personal pain. There is, in his example of the obligation (not merely the desire) to relieve others' pain, a strong dalliance with utilitarianism, though in the end his agent-oriented approach stops him from completing the descent into that abyss. But many questions are left unanswered. If it were not five people but five thousand or five million whose lives could be saved by my infliction of pain, would that make a difference? A decisive difference? If I can divert the course of a flooding river which without human interference would drown a hundred people downstream, and can cause its course to be changed in such a way that a quite different fifty people would drown as the result of my act, would I be right in doing it because a hundred lives would thereby be saved who would otherwise have drowned, or wrong because by my deliberate act I would be causing the death of fifty people? One is not told, and there has been endless controversy on these points. (For a utilitarian viewpoint see Jonathan Glover, *Causing Death and Saving Lives;*[3] for a more agent-centered viewpoint, see John Taurek, "Do the Numbers Count?"[4])

At the opening of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle suggested that one should expect no greater precision in a subject-matter than that subject-matter permits. Certainly Nagel makes no attempt to draw precise lines. Nor does he think that it can be done. He makes some suggestions as to ways in which one may attempt to bridge the gap between subjective and objective in ethics, but does not believe that it can ever be wholly bridged: there remains, as in the other problems he discusses, an unresolved tension between the subjective and the objective points of view. Thus there emerges from his discussion of ethics no recipe that will instruct us as to how to obtain an answer in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

each individual case. All he attempts to provide are certain rough guidelines.

Nor does he make an attempt to justify the guidelines themselves. Indeed, he rejects the claim of any guidelines to be absolute or unbending. For example, the following "moral hierarchy" has been suggested: It's all right for me to go fishing (egoistic satisfaction) if no more compelling consideration overrides it; but if it does, e.g., if I can relieve some human distress by not going fishing, that is what I ought to do (utilitarianism); if I have to choose between relieving a stranger's distress and my father's, I should choose my father's (deontological ethics); but if in doing so I must kill or torture an innocent person, then it is my duty not to do it (I would be violating someone's right). On this schema, utility trumps egoism, deontology trumps utility, and rights trump all the rest. But do they do so always? It is not difficult to think of cases in which these guidelines are counter-intuitive. Since there is always some human distress to be relieved, the result would be that I may *never* go fishing; but is that result acceptable? Is having some innocent enjoyment *wrong?* (Whom have I wronged by doing so?) Again, if I break into a physician's house in order to find on his shelf a medication which will save the life of someone I love, who would die for lack of it, surely I am fully justified in doing so, even though I have without doubt violated the property rights of the physician.

In ethics, everything is contextual; and the context of every action is unique and induplicable, with the result that even a small difference between two situations may yield a difference in our moral verdict. That is why no general rules for behavior can be given that are forever inviolate—other than perhaps a few that are too vague to be put into practice without considerable interpretation (e.g., "Never kill except in self-defense," which leaves it open what class of beings is included and what constitutes self-defense in specific cases). Since the moral character of every action depends on its total context, and every context is unique, it is no wonder that applied ethics is highly resistant to rules that lack resiliency. In addition to all these problems with applied ethics, Nagel has now provided us with still another—the unavoidable tension between the subjective and the objective points of view, each of them compelling and yet each irreconcilable with the other. Nagel's sustained effort, bringing his intellectual searchlight to bear on a variety of issues culminating in the intractable tensions within ethics, has given us yet another reason—as if there had been none before—to be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lieve that the field of applied ethics is, and bids fair to remain, something of a mess.

NOTES

1. C. V. Borst, ed., *The Mind-Brain Identity Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970).
2. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 68–69.
3. Jonathan Glover, *Causing Death and Saving Lives* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1977).
4. John Taurek, "Do the Numbers Count?" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1977).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Peter Munz

SENSE PERCEPTION AND THE REALITY OF THE WORLD

THE EVIDENCE OF THE SENSES: A REALISTIC THEORY OF PERCEPTION

by David Kelley

Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1986. 286 pp., $24.95

While we have come to accept that there can be no certainty in our economic habits and in our scientific practices, there has been left for philosophy—which is largely our understanding of these habits and practices—a terrible legacy by our past. In the past it had always been taken for granted that any knowledge that was available was *certain* knowledge. There had always been a lot of knowledge around. Some now appears to have been false, like the belief that the earth is flat. Other knowledge, such as the belief that water and sun are crucial to life, has turned out to have been correct. But true or false, all knowledge was held to be absolutely certain. It was not even believed that the link between knowledge and certainty was curious or accidental. On the contrary, it was taken for granted and never questioned. This strange link between knowledge and certainty derived from the fact that knowledge was always intimately linked to the social structure of the community in which it was cherished and propagated and that membership of a community was defined in terms of subscription to that knowledge. This meant one could never entertain alternative knowledge without actually emigrating from the community one was in and without cutting one's ties with that community. It also meant

Peter Munz, professor of history at Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand), is the author of *Our Knowledge of the Growth of Knowledge: Popper or Wittgenstein?* (reviewed in this issue).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that it was not possible to criticize that particular knowledge without threatening the social bonds which kept together the community one was a member of. The absence of criticism as well as the identification of membership of a community with the acceptance of a given set of knowledge all conspired to create the illusion that the knowledge being held was *certain* knowledge. To an outside observer it was not. But outside observers were, by definition, excluded from these early communities. Hence the notion of certainty remained unavoidably linked to the idea of knowledge. And when I say "early" communities, I am using that word in a broad sense. It was only half a century ago that in Germany the theory of relativity was branded as a Jewish trick and less than thirty years ago that attempts were made in the United States to define certain kinds of knowledge as "un-American." To be sure, the theory of relativity and the Marxist interpretation of history may well be false; but a rational person would not judge them false because they were either Jewish or un-American.

Sense Perception vs. Self-Evidence

When in the course of the seventeenth century knowledge was being propounded which was clearly not derived from the social structures of existing communities, the idea that whatever could legitimately claim to be knowledge had to be *certain* knowledge remained, unfortunately, intact. Before that time, the notion of certainty had attached itself to all knowledge as a matter of course. But when knowledge was being discussed across social boundaries and evaluated regardless of social institutions, the question of its certainty started to become a very thorny problem. It would indeed not be an exaggeration to say that for philosophy, it became the overriding problem. While scientists were interested in the viability of the theories propounded, philosophers reasoned that the viability of these theories would depend in the last analysis on the reliability of the sources they were derived from. Since the notion of certainty was not abandoned, the search for the "correct" method of inventing or finding theories about the world became a paramount preoccupation. For that reason, the problem of the reliability of the sources moved into the center of philosophical discussion. In modern, post-positivist thinking, we understand that the question of the sources is neither crucial nor even important. We know today that what matters is the evaluation of a theory, not the sources which gave rise to it. The sources can be contaminated, irra-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tional, unreliable, inspirational, politically or ideologically motivated. What matters is the evaluation of the product of these sources. Very few philosophers today would assess the truth of a theory in terms of its sources. But until quite recently, the legacy of the past which had identified knowledge with certainty had forced philosophers to the conclusion that, since certainty was so vital, the question of the sources of knowledge *was* the crucial question. The meaning as well as the truth of gravitation depended, so philosophers thought, on the reliability of the sources of our knowledge of gravitation.

As is well known, in the seventeenth century, the two great rival theories about the reliable sources of knowledge were put forward by Descartes and by Locke. Descartes reasoned that only such knowledge as is self-evident can be a reliable source of further knowledge and yield certainty; Locke argued that the only conceivable source of knowledge which would be truly reliable must be sense perception. What comes into the mind through perception by the senses, Locke maintained, can become the foundation of certain knowledge. As long as one supposes that the main point at issue here is the attainment of certainty, the controversy cannot be resolved.

Although Locke's view smacks of common sense, it has actually very little to recommend itself. One look at the behavior of animals and at their ability to behave correctly and to orient themselves in the world without ever having learned to do so (i.e., without having experience poured into their "minds" through their senses) would have made Locke think twice. But in the age of Locke observations of this kind were not popular, and if one consults writers of that time who had given the intellectual powers of animals some thought, one can see why. Lord Monboddo, for example, believed that the reason why animals never "learn" is that they do not live long enough. With such and similar levels of biological understanding, it is not surprising that the old Christian belief that man was unique should continue to hold sway.

But there are other reasons why Locke's notion is far from plausible. The kind of radical empiricism it enshrines was to lead in the hands of Hume to a universal skepticism in regard to all knowledge, including the theories of no less an admired scientist than Newton. In the mind of Berkeley, that same radical empiricism was to lead to even greater extravagances. Most telling of all the considerations which count against Locke is the fact that Locke himself was very conscious that a major reason why his views seemed so plausible was that they were so "new" and avant-garde. Both in philosophy and in political theory he devoted passages of extraordinary length to the refutation of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

systems which had preceded his own, that is, to Descartes's theory of innate ideas and to Robert Filmer's political philosophy of divine right. The amount of space Locke devoted to establishing that he must be right because he was the most progressive and the most advanced thinker was a typical historicist attempt to persuade by clearing the air of all manner of superstition, medieval as well as modern. (And it succeeded, as in the case of so eminent a thinker as Voltaire.) To reject his "enlightened" and "modern" philosophy, Locke seemed to imply, was to stand in the way of the march of history.

By contrast, Descartes's arguments, though less full of common sense, appear to be more commendable. If one is looking for a reliable foundation of knowledge, the idea that reliability consists in self-evidence is not all that silly. Even Locke, had he been pressed hard for a demonstration of his radical perception-empiricism, would have had to say, in the very end, that it was a good theory because, *obviously* and *self-evidently*, all knowledge we have "in the mind" must have been poured into the mind—how else could it ever come to be there? Ultimately, then, even Locke's radical empiricism appeals to our grasp of the *obvious*. It is, however, not the other way round: Descartes's argument, that only what is self-evident can be reliably true, does not have to appeal to a Lockean argument. However this may be, both Cartesian and Lockean philosophy have gone through an almost infinite series of refinements. Kant suggested that our sense-perceptions are shaped by the innate molds into which they are poured. Husserl argued that the knowledge we derive from our innate certainties is a knowledge of phenomena only. Modern British empiricists maintained that when we perceive, we perceive "sensa," not things. The Vienna positivists would have it that we can even give linguistic expression to a perceptually accessible, special epistemic security which is free from all theoretical accretions. There is a bewildering variety of such views and no conceivable philosophical argument for settling the dispute between them. One must really be thankful that the progress of science did not have to wait upon philosophers. Had scientists held back their hypotheses and discoveries until philosophers had satisfied themselves as to what kind of knowledge was *certain* knowledge, we would still believe that the earth is flat and Copernicus wrong.

Is There a Third Option?

One would have thought that philosophers would have been the first to acknowledge that what is known as "philosophical" reasoning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could neer shed any light on this matter. Many years ago the mathematician I. Waismann, who was greatly interested in philosophical arguments, said that philosophical reasoning is insufficiently rigorous to prove anything and that, therefore, the function of the philosopher was to display an intellectual vision. His argument is rarely heeded.

David Kelley's *The Evidence of the Senses* is a fine book which creates on first reading the overall impression that it manages to display an intellectual vision. The vision it displays is that human beings are organisms which exist in a world of objects and events and that these organisms, endowed with senses, can perceive that world, orient themselves in that world and gain some real knowledge of it. The book communicates a robustly sensitive realism about the world we live in. The most striking part of the argument is that our awareness of physical objects is not mediated by our conceptual apparatus or by any computational facilities of our nervous system and that that awareness of the outside world is, in the first instance, nonpropositional and nonlinguistic. Unlike the Vienna positivists, Kelley is very insistent on this point, for he realizes that once language comes into our perceptions, one can no longer be sure that what we "say" we are perceiving is really the world as it is in itself.

The fine part of this book is that the intellectual vision it conveys is not revolutionary and does not strain our credulity. Indeed, the author's vivid description of how we perceive with our senses and of what we so perceive corresponds so much with our intuitive grasp of the world and of how we consider ourselves to be aware of the world that it can claim to be a work of philosophical reasoning in precisely the sense in which Waismann described philosophical reasoning.

However, on a second and third reading some of these fine impressions are dispelled and the reader instead realizes that he is left with an argument which is not only in itself open to grave doubts, but which also leaves the suspicion that given the nature of purely philosophical reflection, the author could just as easily have produced an argument in favor of the diametrically opposite thesis—idealism. Let me discuss these two points in turn.

Whichever theory of realism based on perception by our senses one examines, one finds that sooner or later it will veer in one of two directions. In one direction lies the view that these sensations, being direct and immediate, will, to the extent that they are so direct, not carry much information about the outside world. In this view perception is all important, but unable to do its job of making sure for our minds that there is an outside world and that that outside world corresponds significantly to the sensations we have. In the other direction is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the view that if a perception-based realism is to make us believe that there is an outside world and that perceptions carry genuine information about that world, we have to make conceptual judgments about it. Insofar as these judgments are conceptual (and capable of linguistic formulation), they are prone to error about the objects we perceive. The general drift of all these arguments has always been that it is a matter of either–or and that what you gain on the roundabout you lose on the swings.

Kelley's originality lies in his argument that there is a third possibility which lies halfway between these two views. He maintains that perception is not a seamless stream of consciousness of sensations[1] and yet asserts throughout that it is not conceptual, either. The reader must then ask himself how perception can be at one and the same time *more* than a stream of undifferentiated consciousness and nevertheless not conceptual. Kelley tries to make out that perception is as direct as sensation and yet that it gives more information about real objects than mere sensations. He also maintains that perception is not dependent on a conceptual identification of the perceived object. Kelley's "perception" is thus made to appear as the vademecum which provides genuine information without recourse to concepts, and as something which, in providing information, is also more than mere sensation.

In order to argue this point he advances rhetorically very persuasive considerations. When closely examined, however, they tend either to confuse or fail to convince. Thus he writes:

> The perceptual judgment is the conceptual identification of what is perceived. Transforming our perceptual awareness of the world into conceptual form, it gives us a way to retain and communicate what we perceive and to express the evidence of the senses in a way that can bring it to bear on abstract conclusions. My approach to the perceptual judgment is centered on this fact; my goal is to understand *the link* it creates between the perceptual and the conceptual awareness of objects [my italics].[2]

This nexus, he says, though not irrelevant for the other theories, has "received little attention." I would like to suggest that it has indeed received little attention because it is like producing rabbits out of a hat. To talk of conceptual awareness seems a contradiction in terms; but I admit that if one is not afraid of such a contradiction, the rabbit will eventually come out of the hat. If one is prepared to assume with Kelley that perceptual awareness has a cognitive content which "serves to ground the cognitive content of the perceptual judgment," confidence

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the legitimizing power of simple and direct perceptions will be justified. But it seems to me that Kelley is here really proving what he has already assumed: i.e., that there are existing physical objects and that we perceive them and that we can grasp the cognitive content of these perceptions simply because we already know that these objects are there, in front of our eyes.

This brings me to the second point. Kelley's argument is flawed because at bottom he starts with the assumption that realism is the correct view. Given the somewhat diaphanous nature of all philosophical reasoning, one could just as readily start with the opposite assumption. Kelley's basic assumption, on which the rest of his argument depends, appears at the very beginning of his book and is enshrined in the very heading of his chapter 1: "The Primacy of Existence."

Kelley opens with a lucid discussion of Cartesian reasoning but makes the reader feel that there was something wrong-headed and arbitrary in Descartes's reliance on subjective consciousness and the sense of self-evidence which that subjective consciousness mediates, if not establishes. Kelley tells us that "realism has run a poor third in terms of popularity among philosophers of perception; and the reason is that most have accepted the primacy of consciousness in some form." Kelley, it seems to me, is putting the cart before the horse. He writes as if philosophers were free to choose what they consider to be primary—consciousness or the belief in the reality of physical objects. He writes as if it were a simple and arbitrary decision as to what to accept as primary. I would argue that the real question is: on what evidence do we make our choice? Kelley's "perceptual realism," it appears, depends on his acceptance of the primacy of existence. Once he accepts the primacy of existence, his further choices are extremely limited. Not that there is a *petitio principii* in his argument: his conclusion that there is a perceptual realism which neither depends on conceptualization nor remains in a noncognitive stream of undistinguished sensations is an original argument which is not tautologous. But it does rule out, by definition, the possibility that in our perceptions of the world there are innate neuronal factors which leave a mark of their very own upon every perception. It also makes him somewhat insensitive to the strength of the reasons so many philosophers have had for accepting the primacy of consciousness. After all, even the argument that perceptual realism is correct is an argument we are conscious of. If there were no consciousness, there probably would be no language in which Kelley could formulate his contentions. I do not claim that this self-reflexiveness of consciousness proves anything by itself; but I do

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

claim that this self-reflexiveness constitutes a *prima facie* consideration which neither Kelley nor anybody is entitled to sweep under the carpet.

From the perspective of the history of ideas, it is strange that Kelley appears unaware that the philosophical implications of perception are being treated by a rapidly increasing number of biologists and philosophers under the heading "evolutionary epistemology." There is a related subject known as "cognitive science" which is also ignored by Kelley, although he does make incidental references to Hilary Putnam and to Paul Churchland. I will not here go into the question of cognitive science. But I would like to enlarge on evolutionary epistemology and its contribution to the subject treated by Kelley. Above all, I would like to point out that if there is any reason at all for believing in "the primacy of existence," it does not come from our sense perceptions but from the fact that we have evolved by natural selection. Without a real world, there would have been nothing to do the selecting and evolution could not have taken place.

The Evolutionary Alternative

Darwin was not given to abstract philosophizing. But in his notebooks he made a pregnant entry which was not to be followed up for over a century. In 1837 he jotted down the following remark: "Plato . . . says in Phaedo that our 'imaginary ideas' arise from the preexistence of our soul, are not derivable from experience.—read monkeys for preexistence." Darwin's casual remark fell on deaf ears, and when Wittgenstein wrote his *Tractatus* he stated that "the Darwinian theory has no more to do with philosophy than has any other hypothesis of natural science." Wittgenstein turned out to be wrong and Darwin, as so often, right. In the early 1940s Konrad Lorenz published a seminal paper on the relevance of Darwinism to philosophy and, in particular, to the question of the evidence of the senses. In this paper he took issue with Kant. Lorenz expressed his doubt that Kant was right in claiming that the evidence of our senses leaves the noumenal world (the world as it is in itself) forever unknown. Put briefly, he rejected Kant's transcendental idealism and replaced it by an account of perception which led straight to a robust realism. Indeed, Lorenz's argument against Kant is fairly similar to Kelley's doubts about the adequacy of Kant's idealism. Lorenz, however, based his rejection of Kant on evolutionary considerations. He explained that the fact that all organisms, including man, have evolved, made Kantian idealism extremely im-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

probable. If one considers that the survival of any organism depends on its ability to make correct responses to its environment, one must conclude that surviving organisms have perceptive powers which enable them to grasp what is really going on in the world. Organisms which make systematically "wrong" responses based on arbitrary or mistaken perceptions cannot long survive. Since all organisms are born with a program which enables them to perceive, one also has to assume that some parts of our powers of perception are innate. At the same time, one has to assume that these innate powers have been naturally selected because of their adaptiveness to the environment and are passed on in the organism's genes because of that adaptiveness. Being adaptive, they must enshrine or embody genuine information about the real world. Lorenz concluded therefore that Kant must have been wrong when he set the noumenal world apart and considered it a closed book,—at least closed to the powers of our perception. On the contrary, Lorenz argued, the *a priori* elements in our perception are not arbitrary but have been selected for survival because, though *a priori* as far as our individual perceptions are concerned, they result from natural selection and therefore must embody genuine information about reality. If they did not, they would not have been selected.

With this argument Lorenz moved the entire debate as to whether the obvious *a priori* element in our perception (an element to which people had thought the distorting quality of human perception must be due) into an entirely new field. The question as to whether our *a priori* knowledge did or did not distort the world as it is in itself was settled: the *a priori* element appeared to be the result of natural selection and, therefore, all of a piece with the world as it is in itself.

Lorenz explained that Kant was not so much wrong in holding that there are *a priori* factors in perceptions as in holding that because of these factors there must be a noumenal world distinct from and unrelated to the phenomenal world which is made up of our perceptions. Lorenz argued that there is a very necessary and intelligible link between the world we perceive and the world as it is in reality. One should note carefully that the basis of Lorenz's argument was the fact that we have evolved. One cannot conceive of evolution if one believes that the *a priori* factors in perception are arbitrary or conventional or accidental presences in our nervous systems. They are what they are because we are adapted to our environment, and if we were not, we would not be here. This idea has also become known as the Anthropic Principle.

There is, of course, a list of qualifications. First, Lorenz did not so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

much reject Kantian idealism as amend it. It would therefore be correct to describe the resulting position as "hypothetical realism." Our perceptions yield information about what the world is really like—hence the term "realism." At the same time, any evolved *a priori* system must be provisional, because evolution indicates that it could be defeated in the struggle for survival by the emergence (Lorenz uses the term "fulguration") of a system which is more adapted, that is, which yields better information as to what reality is really like—hence the epithet "hypothetical."

Second, no organism, not even an organism which belongs to a species that is doing very well in its environment, is a perfect adaptation. One can never think of adaptation as a fit the way a peg fits into a hole or a hand into a glove. As Lorenz himself demonstrated in a famous experiment, one can fool mallard ducklings when they are hatched. If one removes their mother and imitates the mother's movements, the ducklings will come to accept the imitation for the reality and follow the imitator rather than their mother. This indicates that these ducklings are programmed to get it right, but also programmed to get it wrong. The *a priori* information contained in their genes is therefore not an absolute guide to the world they are born into, but only an approximate guide. If there were a large number of experimenters willing to waddle in front of all the ducklings that hatch, ducks would soon become an endangered species. These and similar experiments show that whatever we know of reality via our *a priori* conditioned reflections is never more than an approximation to reality. In the struggle for biological survival, the better approximations are likely to survive at the expense of the lesser approximations; and in the world of ideas, the theory which is a better approximation is to be preferred to the theory which is a lesser approximation.

Third, Lorenz's idea indicates that there is a continuity in evolution from the amoeba to Einstein, as Karl Popper was eventually to put it. Every evolved organism is a sort of trial–and–error experiment with the environment. If it survives, its structure must embody at least some correct information about the environment. If it does not embody such information, it is an "error" and will soon disappear. In that sense one can say that in biological evolution every organism is an embodied or incarnated theory about the world. In the same sense, one can say that in the world of human cultures all hypotheses about the world are disembodied organisms. The only difference is that in the biological world it is very difficult to protect wrong solutions artificially, whereas in the world of human cultures the protection of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wrong solutions is the order of the day. In that world one needs very special care and very special institutions for the process of natural selection to operate and favor the survival of the better solutions at the expense of the less good solutions.

Fourth, some of these ideas go back to the biologist J. von Uexküll, who had advanced the theory that given the very specific perceptual apparatus possessed by every species, every single species creates through its perception its own environment (*Umwelt*). However, Uexküll immediately suggested that this insight could be no comfort to idealists. For since all organisms had evolved successfully on the same planet, the various environments they perceived could not be thought to be their own creations. All parts of the environment had to be compatible with all other parts and that consideration imposes a conceptual constraint upon the singularity of the *Umwelt* of every single species.

There is a whole world of fertile approaches and theories contained in the perspective of evolutionary epistemology, each one of which removes some of Kelley's worries. Kelley worries lest the conceptualists deny that when we perceive we perceive "reality." He also worries lest the perceptualists are allowed to get away with the idea that when we perceive, we have nothing but streaming sensations and no knowledge of what the world is really like. His middle position, indefensible as it may appear from the point of view of pure philosophical reasoning, comes very close to the perspective of evolutionary epistemology. In America these ideas have been pioneered in the work of Donald T. Campbell, who has published papers on both the philosophical and the psychological implications of this perspective. If Kelley is willing to eschew consideration of Campbell's philosophical papers it is very difficult to understand how he could have neglected Campbell's important work on the psychology of perception.[3] It is not an exaggeration to say that Campbell's work has provided a basis for a correct appreciation of the role of perception, of the kind of knowledge we owe to perception, and of the ontological status of what it is we perceive. In short, Campbell's work not only anticipates Kelley's questions but also goes a long way to providing very plausible answers to them.

Campbell's work is an avowed commentary on the philosophy of Karl Popper as presented in Popper's *Objective Knowledge*[4] and in subsequent writings. Popper is not mentioned in Kelley's book. There is no reason why an author should mention everyone else who has ever written on his subject. The case of Popper and Campbell, however, is different. Their work is directly relevant to Kelley's concerns and makes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

many of these concerns redundant. Kelley could have improved his own case and strengthened his own arguments for realism had he availed himself of these other thinkers. In Germany and Austria there has grown up a vast literature on the subject of evolutionary epistemology. Kelley's neglect of that literature is more excusable because most of it has not yet become available in English. There is, however, first of all Konrad Lorenz's own book *Behind the Mirror.* Then there is the splendid and comprehensive work by Hoimar von Ditfurth, *Der Geist fiel nicht vom Himmel,* as well as several books by Rupert Riedl, the most important of which is *Biologie der Erkenntnis.* Last not least, one should mention the most original contribution to this field by Gerhard Vollmer. His *Evolutionäre Erkenntnistheorie,* first published in 1975, was so widely acclaimed that there have been since several revised editions. Quite recently Vollmer has also added two volumes of papers under the title *Was können wir wissen?*[5] The importance of this approach becomes apparent with the emergence of two competing paradigms. On one side there is Vollmer, who follows upon Lorenz with his insistence that there is a fundamental difference between biological evolution and the growth of human knowledge; and on the other side there is Campbell, who follows upon Popper with his insistence that biological evolution and the growth of knowledge are all of one piece and present a continuous series of problem solutions by chance mutation and selective retention. Nothing can be better proof of the fruitfulness of a new perspective than the fact that differences of opinion are beginning to compete for assent.

I have mentioned only the most important works in this field. They must be mentioned here because they deal from a wider perspective and broader basis with the problem Kelley addresses himself to. In doing so, they offer more substantial advances. Kelley's neglect of this literature is specially regrettable because his own "perceptual realism" has a lot in common with the hypothetical realism of Lorenz and Popper, of Campbell, Riedl and Vollmer. In confining himself exclusively to the old philosophical vocabulary, he makes things too difficult for himself. The advances made in biological thought are vitally relevant to Kelley's project and promise a more convincing solution to his problem than conventional philosophical reasoning is capable of. Once it is realized that the conceptual apparatus which processes and molds our sense perceptions of reality is the product of natural selection and would not have been selected if it were not adaptive, the whole question whether our knowledge of the world as it really is in itself is more distorted by concepts or by sensations, or whether there is a third pos-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sibility, as Kelley suggests, becomes highly academic and much less agonizing than Kelley thinks. The correspondence between nature and our reason does not stem from the fact that nature is "rational," but from the fact that our reason is natural.

NOTES

1. *The Evidence of the Senses*, 246.
2. *Ibid.*, 208–9.
3. An example of the former is "Evolutionary Epistemology" in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Popper* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1974); an example of the latter is "Pattern Matching in Distol Knowing" in K. R. Hammond, ed., *The Psychology of Egon Brunswik* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1966).
4. Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).
5. Konrad Lorenz, *Behind the Mirror* (London: Methuen, 1977); Hoimar von Ditfurth, *Der Geist fiel nicht vom Himmel* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1976); Rupert Reidl, *Biologie der Erkenntnis* (Berlin: Verlag Paul Parey, 1979); Gerhard Vollmer, *Evolutionäre Erkenntnistheorie* (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1975); Gerhard Vollmer, *Was Können wir wissen?* (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1986).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anthony O'Hear

THE EVOLUTION OF KNOWLEDGE

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE GROWTH OF KNOWLEDGE: POPPER OR WITTGENSTEIN?

by Peter Munz

London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. 353 pp., £17.95

Peter Munz's book is an attempt to show how the theory of evolution throws light on some key epistemological issues, leading to an improved understanding of the status of our knowledge and of the processes underlying it. He argues that the relativistic conclusions of thinkers like Kuhn and Rorty can be refuted if we pay attention to the biological and historical development of our knowledge, and he also draws an important distinction between intellectually closed and intellectually open societies, showing that systems of false knowledge can play an important role in bonding members of a society. In this review, although I argue that appeals to evolution cannot perform the role Munz claims they can, I hope to make it clear that there is much of value in Munz's discussion of the relevant issues, as well as in his examination of Kuhn's historiography and the nature of intellectually closed societies.

I will begin by letting Munz himself summarize his book's underlying theme, and, at the same time, explain the significance of its subtitle:

> Since the disappearance of Positivism there are two choices in front of us. There is the move towards a sociologizing philosophy, as repre-

Anthony O'Hear, professor of philosophy at the University of Bradford (England), is the author, among many books and articles, of *Karl Popper* (1980) and *What Philosophy Is* (1985).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> sented by Wittgenstein; or the move towards a biology-oriented philosophy, as represented by Popper. (18)

Positivism has disappeared because, in the view of Munz and many others, it has increasingly been borne in on philosophers that knowledge is not gained by means of the passive reception of sensory data, nor can it grow by the accumulation of such data. Sensory data or observations are never purely impressed on us by the world, but always involve prior categorizing or even something like theorizing on our part. So a question immediately arises as to their adequacy as representations of the world. It would be merely dogmatic on our part simply to assume that they were adequate. And, even if they could be assumed to be adequate representations of momentary states of the world, there would still be the problem of induction, of validating the generalizations we make on the basis of a slender sample of momentary perceptions.

How Important is Mirror-Breaking?

In common with Richard Rorty, Munz argues that no simple mirror philosophy will work. We cannot prove that our perceptions mirror the world, because we have no access to the world independent of our perceptions and hence cannot compare them with what they are supposed to be mirroring. Moreover, mirror philosophies overlook the way in which universals and schemes of categorization are involved in all our perceptions, which are perceptions in the light of points of view, fixing on some aspects of the environment rather than others, and blotting out others. But Munz disagrees strongly with Rorty when the latter would have it that modern philosophy since the time of Descartes has been obsessed with the idea of knowledge as a mirror of the world, and even more with Rorty's apparent denigration of the idea of knowledge in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.[1] On the first point, Descartes saw our knowledge in terms of our possession of universal concepts, which we do not derive from sense data, but are at most nudged into activating by sensory inputs. Rorty's conflation of Cartesian theories of consciousness and mirror epistemology will just not stand up to historical examination. In Munz's view, the only pure mirror epistemology in the history of philosophy was the positivistic picture theory we find in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. But the failure of that theory should not lead us, as it did the later

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wittgenstein and his followers, into epistemological despair, nor into Rortyesque sneering at the positivistic ideal of knowledge as a mere duplication of the world.

This, according to Munz, is where Popper and the theory of evolution come to the rescue. For they both teach us that perception and knowledge, being based on anticipations of and theories and guesses about our environment, are no pale copies of that environment, but creative attempts on our part and on the part of other organisms to probe the significance for the perceiver or knower of the environment by eliciting information from it concerning regularities in it. Both Popper and evolution, moreover, teach that information-gathering and knowledge-seeking are not only active processes on the part of organisms and human beings, but that they are activities in which there can be and often is progress to better knowledge—knowledge of more and deeper regularities in the environment—and also that we may be in a position to see some organisms as possessing better knowledge than others, and some theories as better than others.

There is in Munz's book a sustained attack on what he calls "closed circle" philosophy, represented by, among others, the later Wittgenstein, Thomas Kuhn, Michel Foucault and Rorty. (Despite Munz's subtitle, it is Rorty, rather than Wittgenstein, who is the main focus of his attack on relativism.) Closed circle thinkers correctly see the problems with simple correspondence views of knowledge, and observe that we have no direct contact with the world and must therefore always approach it through our theories and concepts. They then conclude that we are forever stuck within a given language game or scientific paradigm or episteme. Any criticism of another theoretical set can only be made on the assumption that our own is correct, as someone from the opposing set would be quite entitled to point out. Munz acutely observes that a Wittgensteinian or Kuhnian relativism leads quite naturally to Foucault's *cui bono*. In whose interest is a given language game or scientific paradigm? Epistemology subverted metamorphoses naturally into Marxizing social criticism of the institutions and structures of knowledge. A Rortyesque faith in the efficacy of civilized conversations and edifying discourses is not likely to survive the first whiff of grapeshot from the radical barbarians already firmly encamped within the academy.

But, according to Munz, we have no need to see ourselves in such a predicament. History does not support Kuhn, while biology undermines Rorty. History does not support Kuhn because one has no need to read the history of science as a history of successive, incommen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

surable paradigms. In his third chapter, Munz mounts a sustained and, to my mind, conclusive assault on Kuhn's methods. Kuhn, or perhaps more importantly those who read him, do not fully realize that you need a philosophy of science in order to write a history of science—in order, that is, to pick out from all the things done by scientists those that are *scientifically* important and relevant. Kuhn approaches the history of science with his relativistic philosophy. It is, then, hardly surprising that the "history" he comes out with supports his philosophy, for that philosophy is what guided his history. And, as Munz points out, other histories can and have been written of the historical events Kuhn describes, picking out other moments and incidents from the mass of data available which by no means support Kuhn's interpretations and philosophy. Writing as a historian, Munz concludes that Kuhn—and many other historians and philosophers of science—write bad history because they fail to satisfy the "postulate of sufficient variety" in selecting their evidence and drawing their philosophical conclusions. That is to say, their selection of the evidence cannot add plausibility to their philosophy because the history has been done too close to and too much in the light of that philosophy, while insofar as the philosophy is flawed, the evidence selected may not be the most important or crucial for understanding the events being studied.

Evolution Behind the Mirror

Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* is fatally flawed, according to Munz, because Rorty paid no attention in it either to Konrad Lorenz's slightly earlier book called *Behind the Mirror,*[2] or to evolutionary epistemology generally. Munz insists that between positivism and relativism, evolution provides a *tertium quid*. That is to say, one can agree that knowledge is not a straightforward picture of the world, for the sorts of reason we have already considered, without succumbing to relativism—if one considers the make-up of the knowing subject. This is the significance of Lorenz's invitation to go *behind* the mirror. We accept the Kantian challenge and take seriously the active contribution any perceiver or knower makes to his picture of the world, but we use our knowledge of biology in general and the theory of evolution in particular to reason that the perceiving apparatus itself must be adapted to the world in which we live, and that its deliverances cannot be wholly out of tune with the world; and the same goes for those theories of ours which survive severe empirical testing. Biology also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can give some backing for what, under the positivist dispensation, was a simple dogma: that we accept our sensory faculties as a reasonable epistemological starting point. For if these faculties are the product of evolution, again, they cannot be maladapted or maladaptive.

This reading back from our biological and physical constitution to conclusions as to what the world must be like to have produced such a being as we are, with such sensory apparatus as we have, Munz sees as a particular case of what he calls the Tropic principle. According to this principle, what exists at any level in the universe is always the result of the environment selecting what is thrown at it by various creative forces, weeding out what does not fit it, and reinforcing what is better adapted to it. Munz sees the selecting and weeding by the environment of the best fitted to it in terms of information possessed by those things which survive the selection process:

> The environment always constrains the changes which can and will take place (in the world). The changes, read backwards, contain information about the environment. . . . The environment always forces the changes which take place to take a certain "turn" so that, given this "turn," we can treat the changes as coded information about the environment. We can read back, from the presence and the nature of the heavier elements, what the universe must have been like before the heavier elements existed. From our galaxy or our solar system, we can trace back the conditions of the universe before our galaxy or solar system existed. The "Tropic Principle" is always at work and states that in all evolutionary change, there is a certain type of constraint between the environment and the results of evolution. . . . (280–1)

The Anthropic Principle, by which we draw certain conclusions about the early history of the universe from the nature of man and his physical composition, is only a special case of Munz's Tropic Principle. Both these principles, and the facts of evolution generally, are made to bear a heavy epistemological burden by Munz and other evolutionary epistemologists. Basically the trick is to say that our mental and perceptual faculties are a good guide to how the world is—they are "worldly" in Munz's phrase—because they are products of evolution. This evolutionary basis to our faculties allows us to espouse a kind of realism without falling into dogmatic empiricism. Kant was right to criticize naive empiricism and to stress the part played by our mental faculties in producing our sensory inputs. But we, with our greater knowledge of biology and of evolution, can now see what he could not see: namely, that our faculties have, over time, been formed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by the world, and so can with some reason be regarded as containing reliable information about the world and as yielding reliable information to us.

Evolution, then, is held to produce the alternative to an untenable naive empiricism (or positivism) and relativism. This is the central contention of Munz's book, and it is certainly welcome to have an informed and sophisticated presentation of this position in English. But I cannot share Munz's optimism about the *epistemological* potential of either the theory of evolution or of the Tropic principle. For, in doing epistemology, we are not entitled simply to assume certain results of science or any other field of enquiry. That would be too easy a way to deal with the skeptic or the idealist. For all their faults, positivists at least saw there was a problem here, and attempted to build science up from supposedly firmer foundations in sense experience. Evolutionary epistemology, on the other hand, invokes our biological knowledge in order to refute a particular brand of skepticism. We are asked to accord the deliverances of our senses some positive degree of probability because biology teaches us various things about the origins and past development of our sensory faculties. But, given that biology itself is a part of our system of knowledge, and in the end acceptable (if it is) because of its accord with sensory evidence, there is a massive circularity in attempting to justify or probabilify our sensory data by appeal to biology.

Munz and Lorenz would probably reply at this point that we are entitled to ask questions about the nature of the mirror and its likely causal origins even before we assume the accuracy of the mirror. While this is true, I am not clear that anything very significant about the mirror's origins is going to come out without assuming that certain skeptical theses are definitely false, for example, that the mirror has been created by an evil genius, or that it is not a mirror of anything, but a self-generating fantasy. To invoke biology, and to see our perceptual apparatus as a biologically constituted device is not so much to refute skepticism or idealism as simply to side-step them.

Evolution vs. Evolutionary Epistemology

Perhaps more worrying for evolutionary epistemology, though, than the possibility of a huge *petitio principii* at its heart (which a hard-headed realist might dismiss as merely a theoretical possibility not worth bothering about, in view of the massive explanatory and pre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dictive successes of our systems of knowledge, including biology), would be the thought that biology itself supports no conclusion about our knowledge as optimistic as the one Munz and other evolutionary epistemologists would like to draw. And, on at least one reading of the theory of evolution, this is precisely what seems to be the case.[3]

Munz himself does correctly and interestingly point out that there is such a thing as the evolution of evolution. That is to say, at different levels of development different types of processes come into play. With the development of inorganic matter, there is almost perfect matching between environment and type of stuff, and there are no "mistakes" in the replication of inorganic matter. With the organic, though, the situation is quite different. We get trials (conjectures) and errors (refutations) in the reproduction of living things, or, in the phrase beloved of evolutionary epistemologists, random variation and selective retention. It is for this reason that Popper and his followers see a parallel between organic evolution and our acquisition of knowledge. In both cases, something is proposed to the environment, which may then be rejected as a less good proposal than some alternative (usually an already existing alternative in the case of biological evolution).

In his discussions of knowledge and of evolution, Munz, like Popper, is keen to stress that the environment does not directly inform or mold the material it works on. In the biological case, to suppose that it did would be to commit the sin of Lamarckianism, and certainly no mechanism has ever been proposed to show how the environment could work directly on genetic material. In the case of knowledge, Munz is avowedly Popperian (or even Kantian) at this point. What we know and perceive is always in the nature of a conjecture thrown at the world. There is no induction, no direct mirroring of the world, no need in Munz's view to postulate direct causal contact between knower and known, or even a theory of reference, presumably because for Munz, as for his relativist opponents, reference is always to be construed as intra-theoretical. But we are saved from relativism by the thought that biology assures us that our basic forms of knowledge and our perceptual categories must be adaptive. They have survived the relentless process of weeding out by the environment, and so can be provisionally accepted as reasonably accurate representations of our environment.

Unfortunately for the Munzian project, biology teaches us nothing so optimistic, a point of which he is fully and admirably aware when it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

comes to considering explicit theorizing and cultural evolution, as we shall see. What biology teaches is that members of species better adapted to a given environment than their rivals have a better chance of survival in that environment than less well-adapted competitors. It does not teach that every limb or faculty or disposition of successful members of a species are adaptive or a close fit with the environment. As Darwin himself was fully aware, there is in nature a huge amount of wastage and lack of fit. Successful members of successful species have only to be better than their actual competitors in the relevant environment. If no better competitor comes along, the environment will tolerate all sorts of maladaptiveness, even in apparently successful species. It is true that Munz claims only that evolution guarantees no more than that our computation of signals from the environment cannot be "grossly and consistently mistaken to the point where we could not tell whether to sit down on an object or avoid it like a death-trap" (199). But the ability to pick out potentially fatal objects in our environment hardly requires that much of the detail of our perception is adequate, or that our underlying conceptions of the ontology of the world are correct. Take, for example, the famous frog, which distinguishes only moving objects in its environment. It acts successfully enough in avoiding predators and catching food, but it is hard to know whether we could credit it with any true beliefs about the nature of the world. Does it, for example, falsely believe that the world consists only of moving objects, or that its food and its predatory have a very short life span, existing just when they move? Its survival and what we know of its perceptual apparatus are surely consistent with a very distorted view of the world, although we, from our point of view, could map its largely erroneous beliefs on to what we take to be a more correct and less partial view. When we turn to our own perceptual beliefs, though, evolution is powerless to show us that we might not really be in the same position as the frog appears to be to us. Here adaptiveness of response is consistent with highly distorted and inadequate perceptions of the world. Evolution, in other words, is powerless to solve Kant's problem, powerless, that is, to show that the world that appears to us has much at all in common with the way it appears to us, and powerless too to show us *which* of the ways it appears to us adequately represent the way it is. The theory of evolution properly considered seems to suggest epistemological agnosticism rather than any guarantee, however tentative or hypothetical, about all or any of our perceptions or inherited theories of the world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Success Need Not Be "Progress"

In common with many other evolutionary epistemologists, Munz would probably claim at this point that evolution does suggest that our perceptions are reasonably accurate indications of the way the world really is because evolution itself is a progressive process—one that progresses towards the better and more complex. On page 209, Munz writes that evolution "is a progression of knowledge in which the environment selects what is compatible with it so that one can see that the later stages always contain knowledge about the earlier stages." On page 174, he argues that evolution rules out relativism, characterized as "the belief that one form of life is as fit or variable as any other." And on pages 255–6, he speaks of the selection of valid hypotheses being carried out by the environment and of the evolutionary progression of knowledge moving in an unplanned way "towards increasing truth about the world." There is here reference to Popper's famous model of the growth of scientific knowledge through the elimination of false hypotheses, but I think that neither in the evolutionary case nor (as I shall suggest briefly later) in the Popperian philosophy of science can the elimination of false hypotheses guarantee progress of knowledge in the intended sense.

In the case of evolution, the reason is simple. Evolution is a theory of progression, but not of progress in any straightforward sense. Munz is right to stress the linearity in evolution between ancestors and descendants, and also right to stress the non-relativity of evolutionary victories. The fitter species just will defeat the less fit. But what is crucial to bear in mind is the sense in which fitness is irreducibly relative. Evolutionary fitness is always fitness relative to a given environment, and in no way guarantees fitness in any other environment, where a once defeated competitor might actually do better than its conquerer (although it will not be around to have the chance, of course). So there is nothing absolute about evolutionary progression, and I cannot see that dealing with perception and knowledge in any way alters or leads us to modify this fundamental evolutionary thesis. If we were in the frog's environment, being able to observe and contemplate all sorts of immobile objects might well mean we always tended to miss the fly just when it came. In perception, as in anything else, merely being later in an evolutionary sequency or being more complex in structure in no way provides any absolute guarantee of what is delivered by the perceiving apparatus in question.

So I have to conclude that evolutionary epistemology is not the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hoped-for *tertium quid* between dogmatic positivism and relativism. To think that it might be involves reading (or, rather, misreading) the theory of evolution as implying far more adaptiveness than it does and also as involving some sort of progress in an absolute sense. Against both these misreadings, one has to stress the thoroughly relative aspects of evolution: that fitness is always comparative fitness against less good competitors, and that success is always success in a given environment. It is not even the case that evolution is always towards the more complex, as limbs and organs and abilities have sometimes been lost in the course of evolution. More to the point here, though, we cannot assume that a successful species in the evolutionary struggle is either terribly closely responsive to its environment in all its faculties or dispositions, or that it would be well adapted to any other environment. Both these points seem to me to undermine any attempt to derive positive epistemological conclusions from the theory of evolution.

Social Stasis

The strange fact about making these points in connection with Peter Munz's book is that he realizes as well as anyone that survival is perfectly consistent with all sorts of false beliefs about the world. In what is perhaps the most interesting part of the book, Munz examines the distinction between societies which are intellectually open and those which are intellectually closed. For when it comes to explicit human myth and theory, he recognizes that there is no direct way the environment can get to the theory in order to eliminate falsity. There may well be all sorts of protective layers between the theory and the world by means of which the impact of false predictions or beliefs is deflected. (My main quarrel with Munz, in fact, is over the extent to which falsity in those theories and beliefs which are incarnated in perceptual organs and in non-explicit assumptions creatures have about the world can also be insulated from environmental criticism, by being embedded in a systematic web of beliefs which, as a whole, are merely adaptive enough to allow at least as much of the species to survive as permits its continued existence in the world—not a very high epistemological demand, to be sure.) When we come to systems of human theorizing, as everyone familiar with the Quine-Duhem thesis will be aware, it is perfectly possible to protect any false belief whatever against environmental pressure by making adjustments elsewhere

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the system, thus deflecting criticism, or even by simply ignoring potential criticism altogether. This avoidance of criticism can be rational or irrational, depending on the details of the case. Munz's distinction between intellectually open and intellectually closed societies is intended to point to the way in which for many—indeed most—societies in the history of the world, refusal to consider criticism of cherished beliefs is actually a matter of unconscious policy.

Why should intellectual closure of this sort be tolerated if, as many philosophers have argued, belief logically *aims* at truth? Munz's insight is that deflection of criticism and avoidance of truth when it comes to its central myths and cosmologies can itself be highly adaptive for a society, because membership of a society or group can be enhanced and made explicit by its members all recognizing and adhering to a particular belief set. But if a society is defined through a system of commonly held beliefs, it would be much more effective if these beliefs were peculiar and idiosyncratic, by which one could thereby distinguish one's own group from all other groups. And the more peculiar and false a set of beliefs, the greater the distinctiveness and the greater its potential bonding power; and the resulting bonds will in turn lead to greater cooperation among the members of the society in question, yielding such social goods as the division of labor and generational continuity. Thus, in the evolution of a society, a false set of community-wide beliefs can be a positive evolutionary advantage. As Munz himself puts it,

> since "fitting nature" is not the criterion of selection in this case, there is a sort of inverse proportion between being selected and being non-fitting. The more absurd an invention, the more likely its usefulness as a social bond. (292)

Munz believes that the only occasions in the history of the world when criticism of cherished beliefs has been a matter of policy have been for a short time in classical Greece, and, since the scientific revolution, in what are now the Western democracies and countries influenced by them. Indeed, the mystery is why, given the Munzian perspective, societies have ever *tolerated,* let alone encouraged, intellectual openness.

Munz's thesis of the social bonding potential of idiosyncratic and false beliefs in a society—and hence of their adaptiveness in helping a society to define itself and reinforce and protect its identity against outsiders—has interesting similarities and differences with Hayek's views on belief and evolution. Hayek defends the status of traditional beliefs and moralities against rationalistic criticism on the grounds that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the rational mind is incapable of grasping the systemic effects of traditional beliefs. A successful society, in Hayek's view, is one that has survived and continues to flourish. Because of our ignorance of its inner workings, we do not know just what has brought about its success. This will be as true in the sphere of ideology and value as it is in the sphere of economic activity. In criticizing and altering a bit of traditional belief or morality, we have no idea of the risks we are running. For Munz, too, disturbing a traditional belief structure might well upset the bonds holding a society together. Munz and Hayek, then, both see community-held beliefs as highly significant in bonding the community. Both, in a sense, see the cunning of reason and the invisible hand at work in this sphere, and both give a positive evaluation of its role in bonding a society. But, whereas Hayek, in his latest writings, appears to leave matters there, with dire warnings about the potentially subversive effects of rational enquiry, Munz's attitude is firmly Popperian. Although, as he suggests, it is no coincidence that growth of knowledge has often occurred in times of political turmoil, when social bonds and belief systems have started to fall apart—such as Medici Florence or Weimar Germany—Munz clearly regards the growth of the critical spirit and the free market in ideas as desirable, and epistemological mercantilism or protectionism as undesirable. Against Hayek, he regards the benefits accruing from the growth of knowledge in a society, and the conditions promoting such growth, as outweighing the benefits of the social bonding of intellectually closed societies. Munz comments, correctly and pertinently in my view, on the repression inherent in closed societies—on their silence, secrecy and authoritarianism, and of the offense all this implies to the human spirit, something all too easily overlooked by those who extol their virtues—which is what is worrying in Hayek's recent attempts to defend irrationalism in matters of belief and value. Munz's attitude of looking for alternative social bonds and releasing "knowledge from its social duties" (306) seems in fact to be far more consistent with other aspects of Hayek's thought, as well as being far more likely to allow the invisible hand full scope for its operations in the sphere of the mental.

The Closed Society

One criticism I would make of Munz at this point is that his stress on the social bonding role of false knowledge tends to make it mysterious

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as to how and why an open society can emerge at all. More needs to be said about the alternative, cognitively neutral forms of social bonding, of which Munz speaks. Hayek might also have a point if, as he does, he were to say that the example of Weimar Germany is hardly conclusive evidence in favor of the socially desirable effects of the type of condition likely to be conducive to intellectual ferment. Is the growth of knowledge really worth all that? And, in any case, what evidence is there that a Popperian free market in ideas and the ruthless weeding out of false theories produces real growth in knowledge? Here, of course, we come up against the familiar objections to the Popperian project in the philosophy of science, a project Munz clearly identifies with, seeing it as a further and significant step in the evolution of knowledge gathering processes. But how, we may ask, can we be sure that the elimination of false theories produces any increment of true knowledge? In Popperian terms, of course, we cannot be sure. Or to put the point another way: even if, as seems plausible, the undoubted growth of scientific knowledge since the sixteenth century has gone hand in hand with the critical method and intellectual openness on the part of the scientific community, can we have any assurance that the one is the cause of the other?

I think that there are no guarantees here; nor do I think that Popper would wish to be seen to be offering any. Having said that, though, it is certainly plausible to see the growth of scientific knowledge in terms of greater and more accurate knowledge of empirical, observable effects, and this is something suggested rather well by the Popperian model of the critical process in science as involving the replacement of theories by new theories of greater empirical precision and universality. The critical method will not guarantee that the more universal, more precise theory is closer to the *theoretical* truth about the world, but involved in the replacement process itself is a move to greater empirical adequacy. This is not all Popper or Munz want (or at times seem tantalizingly to promise us in their talk of "deeper" theories taking us far beyond the observable), but it is actually rather nicely consistent with evolutionary processes generally, in that the inner core of an organism, including its inner cognitive structures, may well be insulated from the direct effects of the environment, which are only felt at the points of contact between the outer skin and the world, which are where the environment really can make its selections of the more fit.

If some suitable application of the critical method is as likely as anything to be productive of empirical theories of greater empirical preci-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sion and generality, can we be sure of the beneficial effects of openness in matters of human feeling and value? While not going all the way with Hayek's irrationalism, I would urge that one does have to be cautious here. Perception of value involves above all an education in feeling and sensibility, something which may not accord with the aggressively critical methods appropriate to empirical inquiry. Hayek is quite right to point to the moral idiocy of a figure like Keynes who, at the age of 20, claimed on the basis of his own judgment and reason to recognize no moral obligation or inner sanction to conform to or to obey or respect customary morality. Popper and Popperians, in extolling the undoubted virtues of critical rationalism, need to take cognizance of the way in which a certain form of incessant criticism and rationalism can undermine one's feeling for moral and social values, including, of course, those of liberalism and respect for the individual person on which the open society itself is founded. They need urgently to explain how rationality can operate on systems of value and meaning in a non-destructive way. I do not make this point in criticism of Munz in particular. One of the many virtues of his book is that his examination of the socially useful effects of adherence to false bodies of knowledge and theory throws into sharp relief the likely difference between the effects of unbridled criticism in the realm of empirical inquiry and its effects on a system of value and social meaning.

NOTES

1. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
2. Konrad Lorenz, *Behind the Mirror* (London: Methuen, 1977).
3. I deal in more detail with evolutionary epistemology in my paper "On What Makes an Epistemology Evolutionary," *Supplementary Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 58 (1984): 193–217, and "Has the Theory of Evolution any Relevance to Philosophy?," *Ratio* 29 (1987), 16–35.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I. C. Jarvie

EVOLUTIONARY EPISTEMOLOGY

EVOLUTIONARY EPISTEMOLOGY, THEORY OF RATIONALITY, AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

edited by Gerard Radnitzky and W. W. Bartley, III

La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1987. 475 pp., $39.95, $14.95 (paper)

Although both science and philosophy as they are presently practiced evolved from an earlier form of philosophy, all too many present-day professional philosophers are loath to admit continuity, still less any continuing overlap, between them. There is a tendency to think that philosophy has a distinct "subject matter" which legitimates its professionalization. Standard philosophical education includes no science—natural or social. Hence it is a welcome change to read a book which presumes a reader interested in pursuing philosophical questions over the border into science, and which holds that this is legitimate and enlightening. The particular philosophical questions pursued in this book concern human knowledge, the real world, and rationality. They are pursued over the border into evolutionary biology which, it is claimed, offers to epistemology arguments and criteria of assessment that need to be met.

The Evolution of Evolutionary Epistemology

The authors of the eighteen chapters of the book are philosophers and scientists attempting to create a new synthesis of epistemology and

I. C. Jarvie is professor of philosophy at York University, Toronto, author of numerous publications on the philosophy of anthropology, and managing editor of *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Darwinism: *evolutionary epistemology*. Their declared inspiration is the thought of Sir Karl Popper. Popper's *Logik der Forschung* of 1935 (translated as *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* in 1951[1]) had argued for a strikingly new view of science. What characterized scientific hypotheses for Popper was their vulnerability to empirical evidence: falsifiability. What characterized scientific method was the quest for bold, i.e. falsifiable hypotheses; what characterized scientific rationality was the acceptance of the challenge, i.e. the search for falsifying evidence and the impact or dent it was invited to make on hypotheses. It is notable that Darwin was not mentioned in that classic work; the examples of science all came from physics. Not surprisingly: physics then underlay most work in the philosophy of science. At the end of *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* Popper made a couple of observations on science as a biological phenomenon, where, perhaps alluding to Darwin, he viewed science as an instrument of adaptation:

> Has our attitude, then, to be one of resignation? Have we to say that science can fulfil only its biological task; that it can, at best, merely prove its mettle in practical applications which may corroborate it? (281)

Apparently in 1935 Popper considered the biological aspect of science to be instrumental: a tool useful for survival. In that publication there was no attempt to connect science as an exploratory tool (what he later called a "searchlight"[2]); its being selectively pressured by experience through falsification; and the notion of a real world environment to which it and we adapt best by "getting it right." Popper said he was a realist, but declared that a personal preference.

Back to the book under review. Absent from it is a straightforward account of how Popper navigated the path from his views of 1935 to the later positions which have become the starting point for evolutionary epistemology; without it it is difficult to get a grip on the three parts of the book or on their interconnections. The introduction instead narrates the story of how the volume grew from a series of conversations and meetings in the early 1980s. The outcome is a hybrid: a cross between a volume of proceedings and a reader, for it also includes several previously published papers that are already classics: two by Donald T. Campbell on natural selection epistemology ("Evolutionary Epistemology" and "Blind Variation and Selective Retention in Creative Thought as in Other Knowledge Processes"); Sir Karl Popper's first Darwin Lecture ("Natural Selection and the Emergence of Mind"); and three papers critical of Bartley's theory of comprehen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sively critical rationalism by John F. Post, including his classic "The Possible Liar." Several of the eleven other contributions distributed through the three parts deserve in their turn to become classics, especially those by Gunther Wächtershäuser ("On the Nutritional Origins of Sensory Perception"), Gerhard Vollmer ("On Supposed Circularities in an Empirically Oriented Epistemology") and Peter Munz ("Philosophy and the Mirror of Rorty"). As these latter surnames indicate, the volume is also cross-cultural, especially in bringing German-speaking contributors into dialogue with English-speaking philosophers. In addition to the contributors forming a small conversational circle, they give off an air of being combative and isolated. Their brusque dismissal of the standard philosophical approaches to epistemology is matched by their work being in its turn unknown to (and if known, dismissed by) many of those whom they criticize. What then are we to make of this mixture?

It was a bold editorial idea to bring together the three parts of the book, which are respectively on evolution, rationality and the sociology of knowledge. What connections are there between them? We had best start with Sir Karl Popper's own evolution. He constantly extended and generalized his own philosophy. Evolutionary epistemology he conceived of as a generalization of his theory that we learn by trial and error, error being the selective impact experience makes on our trials. How did this come about? These are the bare bones of my account. Long before this late generalization of Popper's philosophy, there had been others which led to it. Popper had already generalized falsificationism by identifying it with both the method of trial and error and that of adopting a general attitude—a critical attitude—towards ideas and actions. In *The Open Society and Its Enemies* of 1945[3] Popper used his fallibilism to revise rationalism, re-centering it on criticism, or good reasons *contra,* rather than on defense, or good reasons *pro*. He argued that our political institutions and policies were frozen theories and our rationality demanded that we constantly scrutinize them for mistakes and be prepared to make consequential changes. He also made so bold as to extend these ideas to individual development, when he suggested that both higher animals and human beings exhibit it as a principal mechanism of learning.[4]

Thus was the groundwork laid for Popper's later neo-Darwinian synthesis in which he argued that trial and error was not only the hallmark of a fruitful epistemology, but was also a principal means by which human beings learnt, ontogenetically and phylogenetically. This was brought out in his Herbert Spencer Lecture of 1961.[5] In addi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion to this generalization of his ideas there was another problem that aroused controversy and which he addresses in this volume. How was it that he, a falsificationist, could commend evolutionary theory when he had described it in print as "almost tautological"?[6] The trouble was that the evidence for there being selective survival is very selective, namely whatever survived. Thus evolution was in danger of backing into the trap of admitting that the evidence that something was fit to survive consisted primarily of its having survived. Popper's "recantation" of this view, reprinted here but first published in 1978, also drew criticism. He says that in its strong form the theory of natural selection asserts that

> *all* organisms, and especially *all* those highly complex organs whose existence might be interpreted as evidence of design and, in addition, *all* forms of animal behavior, have evolved as the result of natural selection; that is, as the result of chance-like inheritable variations, of which the useless ones are weeded out, so that only the useful ones remain (144).

Unfortunately, it turns out that this theory "is not only refutable, but actually refuted," for, "like so many theories in biology, evolution by natural selection is not strictly universal, though it seems to hold for a vast number of important cases" (144–45). None of the contributors takes up the implications of this extraordinary admission. It makes the logic of biology correspond to the logic of the social sciences as developed in Popper's hard-to-obtain paper "La Rationalité et le Statut du Principe de Rationalité" where he argues, similarly, that the principle that human beings act rationally is false, yet a good approximation and a very fruitful research program.[7] I take up below some other topics that are in this first part of the volume.

The connection between part 1, "Evolutionary Epistemology" and part 2, "Theory of Rationality and Problems of Self-Reference" has now to be made. What has self-reference to do with evolution? One of the editors of this volume, W. W. Bartley, III, while studying with Popper, attempted his own generalization of the philosophy. His *The Retreat to Commitment* (1962)[8] (wherein Darwin was mentioned only for his impact on theology) argued that Popper's theory of science, with its stress on falsification rather than verification, held the seeds of a bolder view which distinguished a non-justificationist from a justificationist attitude to ideas. Having made this move Bartley concluded that the ancient problem of the self-consistency of rationalism could be solved without the concession to irrationalism made by Popper in chapter 24 of *The Open Society*. Popper called his position "critical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rationalism," and it said that rationalism has to be chosen before it can be used, i.e. it must be chosen irrationally. Bartley named his own self-consistent position "comprehensively critical rationalism" (CCR), and it said that we are rational as long as we are willing to submit even our rationalism to critical scrutiny, regardless of the fact that we cannot "justify" our rationalism in a positive sense. He later introduced the revised terminology "pan-critical rationalism." His co-editor Radnitzky refers to it as the "criticist" position. My preference among this unhappy welter is for the original terminology, which has the merit of continuity with Popper's.

The second part of the present book reprints several papers that purport to expose logical flaws in CCR, followed by spirited rebuttals by Radnitzky and Bartley himself. What is the connection between evolutionary epistemology and CCR? It seems to be that Bartley's theory of rationality is a statement of the means of human learning that corresponds closely to the most Darwinian-advantageous policy that would be suggested by an evolutionary epistemology. Darwin replaced justification of existence with the accident of survival – survival due to luck and resistance to pressure. Bartley's defense of his theory of rationality in part 2 is thus a defense of the logical generalization of Popper's evolutionary epistemology, though it preceded that stage and, more surprisingly, as we shall see, although Bartley says that his views would be viable even were his critics successful.

Part 3, the shortest, is more loosely linked to parts 1 and 2, its principal targets being a selection of currently fashionable justificationist positions: the pragmatist relativism of Richard Rorty, the views of some British relativists working in sociology of education, humanistic Marxism and the literature espousing a reduction of science to sociology.

Each of the parts of the volume is capable of standing on its own. They sit somewhat uneasily together because they address different readers at different levels of technicality. The two hundred pages on evolutionary epistemology are for those readers, philosophers and non-philosophers, who find important and intriguing the project of constructing a theory of knowledge consistent with Darwinism. Such readers will get, besides a stream of arguments to this effect, a *tour d'horizon* of some problematic areas of evolutionary theory, especially regarding the evolution of the senses and the relation of the senses to the acquisition of memory, theory, and the notion of a real world. Occasionally the presentation gets as technical as *Scientific American*, but little turns on mastery of the details.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Real World as a Biological Fact

Boldest of the ideas mentioned is Wächtershäuser's explanation ("Light and Life: On the Nutritional Origins of Sensory Perception") of the development of the sense of sight as an evolutionary process consequent to (not the search for knowledge but) the search for food. According to Campbell, writing long before Wächtershäuser, evolution was essentially driven by *blind* trials and selective eliminations (chapters 2 and 3). This sets us up for Wächtershäuser's idea that blind organisms sought out light because it was a source of food-energy, not in order to explore the environment. This is very nice, because it explains the search for knowledge as an emergent, unintended consequence of the more biologically universal search for nourishment. Primitive organisms can then be modelled as symbiotically working with light-using organisms as means of directing their locomotion to where there is food.

Although Popper has no qualms about a teleological model of Darwinism,[9] his followers welcome this non-teleological explanation of the pursuit of knowledge as the outcome of something more basic. This has interesting consequences for our notion of the real world, consequences that relate back to Popper's characterization of the biological view of science as merely an adaptive instrument. Wächtershäuser and Campbell do not need to *assume* a real world or real environment which an organism needs to control or defend itself against. They can treat that environment not as real but as a hypothesis with which some organisms operate, of which some organisms cannot conceive, and which some higher organisms (i.e., non-realist philosophers) even deny. The real world has the status of a construction, a hypothesis. Is this akin to the merely instrumentalist view of science Popper advanced in 1935? No, for this hypothesis unifies and orders the environment for the organism, gives it a benchmark against which to check its adaptation. The instrumentality is not the sole aspect of the hypothesis: what is lethal for the maladapted is not so much the randomness or relativity of the world, but the simple error of getting it wrong. Realism is thus the hypothesis which best explains the facts. Were there not a real world out there, we would not have evolved the behaviors and perceptual devices that allow us to survive in one.

This leads us straight to Popper's speculations about the origins of mind (in chapter 6). The origin of consciousness, he suggests, is in open behavioral programs (or templates) that present their owners with choices. More favorable choices can be made as the result of con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

templation, for which the development of consciousness is necessary, as well as the development of language as the ability to communicate, remember, and discuss options—and, finally, to develop criticism of poor ones. Clearly, choices reviewed and rejected in thought rather than in locomotion are less lethal to the choosing organism.

At the end of part I is a commanding chapter by Vollmer, "On Supposed Circularities in an Empirically Oriented Epistemology," a survey of a whole series of frequently heard arguments against the enterprise of epistemology in general and of evolutionary epistemology in particular. Regrettably, Vollmer devotes a scant two pages to the claims that Darwinism is tautological and circular. Vollmer also neglects to mention that Popper previously subscribed to one of these claims, but he does admit that proving the non-circularity has been a major task, only recently accomplished. Vollmer's thesis is that "fitness" can be seen as a specific value of three functional parameters: stability of system; speed of reproduction; and quality of reproduction. In 1971 Manfred Eigen combined these into a quantitative "value function" (196).

If many intelligent philosophers remain unimpressed with evolutionary epistemology it may be because they are anti-realists (e.g. Michael Ruse). But it may alternatively be because they do not see that Darwinism has solved the problem of overcoming skepticism towards the external world. In this they are not in dispute with Popper, who regards skepticism, instrumentalism, idealism, fideism, and so on, as positions that can be maintained consistently in the face of any and all attacks. If overcoming a skeptical anti-realism is one's aim, then evolutionary epistemology provides at best weak arguments. It is easy to forget this. Bartley reports (7) biologists breaking into applause when Popper said that Wheeler's idealist account of quantum physics is contradicted by biology. But Wheeler could well counter, "so much the worse for biology." "Biology" here is a misleading code word for Darwinian *theory*. Popper's philosophy allows that one check on a theory is its compatibility with other theories. Suppose that the metaphysics of quantum theory is idealist and that the metaphysics of Darwinism is realist; this would pit Darwinian theory against quantum theory—not a contest with an obvious winner. So why the applause?

The problem is that utilizing Darwin to foster epistemological realism seems to go beyond Popper's *philosophia negativa*. Refutations are important in that philosophy, as I understand it, because they are the places where our ideas make contact with reality. That contact, however, knocks down what we thought: it does not tell what is the case,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nor does it even indicate the direction in which to modify our ideas. Those moves are what constitute human creativity in science. It is *like* searching for a black cat in a dark room; but the status of cat, room, walls, darkness, and even the searching self are all *hypothetical entities*. To argue that the cat has evolved does not settle the hash of those who doubt the whole business. For some of us realists, then, Darwinism is worrying because it may seem to offer more than it can deliver.

Is Non-Justificational Philosophy Inconsistent?

As noted, some of the material in part 1 is hard going for non-philosophers, but rewarding to all who try. In this respect it is a good lead into part 2, which is highly technical philosophy with the capacity to stymie non-philosophers. It presupposes familiarity with Bartley's theory of comprehensively critical rationalism (CCR) and its background. It also demands some understanding of basic symbolic logic. In addition it is not sufficiently explicitly linked to evolutionary epistemology. Logically speaking, the entire debate is an expansion of some arguments occupying a few pages by Vollmer where he tries to show that self-referential epistemologies can be consistent.

Three papers by Post and one by Watkins argue that Bartley's CCR breaks down. Perhaps the crispest formulation of this is by Radnitzky:

> Bartley's critics appear to suppose that something analagous to the Liar Paradox ("This sentence is not true") would arise with sentences of the form "This statement is not criticizable." Assume that it is claimed that all components of x are held open to criticism and that "holding open to criticism" entails "being criticizable." Then, if a component of x can be shown to be uncriticizable, x has thereby been criticized. Thus *prima facie* the situation appears to be that by showing y to be uncriticizable, y has been criticized. This means that by showing y to be uncriticizable, it has been shown to be criticizable. Hence, pancritical rationalism must be self-referentially inconsistent. (305)

Post claimed that all theories of rationality constructed like Bartley's were either referentially inconsistent or inherently incomplete.

In an extended reply Bartley charges his critics with separating his ideas from their problem situation. This is not to say that he denies the paradoxes found. On the contrary, he says he always expected they would turn up. But the problem situation was the confusions due to the failure to unfuse justificationist and non-justificationist views of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rationality, and this is, he says, unaffected by these paradoxes. His sketch of a consistent rationalism was intentionally built so as not to be immune to criticism, and hence it possibly is criticizable and thus it meets its own standard.

The intricacy and dense weave of the texture of this part of the book make it difficult. Here and there critic and defender add notes and addenda to their arguments, answering objections that come up only later in the book. According to custom the last word belongs to he who opens the debate; in this case that person happens to be one of the editors of the volume. One can only admire Post and Watkins for permitting their papers to appear in such circumstances.

Part 3 has three ill-matched chapters on the social sciences, which do not demand so much philosophical expertise. Here it is hardest to see a connection to Popper's ideas in general or his evolutionary epistemology in particular. Munz's extended critique of Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*[10] is a superbly written polemic, contrasting the rationality and progressiveness of evolutionary epistemology with the vacuity of Rorty's irrationalism. Flew's chapter "Must Naturalism Discredit Naturalism?" is the odd man out. For one thing, Flew operates within the very assumptions of ordinary-language philosophy that were scorned by Popper in his preface to *The Logic of Scientific Discovery;* Flew's examples are further installments of his relentless excoriation of the writings of elements of the British left; and he seeks to defend a magisterially complacent assertion by the Catholic philosopher Geach to the effect that the claim to be able to explain language or reasoning or choice naturalistically deserves no more than mild curiosity, not curiosity about the explanation but about how the fallacy that must be involved is concealed. It would be interesting to know if the editors consider the Flew/Geach view to be compatible with CCR or an alternative to it.

The final chapter, by Bartley, "Alienation Alienated: The Economics of Knowledge *versus* the Psychology and Sociology of Knowledge" is, as usual with this author, beautifully written. It lists some important but poorly diffused information concerning research into Marx's 1844 manuscripts. It has a sensitive and poignant discussion of the relation between an author and his work and of the suffering that mistreatment of the latter can cause the former. And it contains the following brilliant and gnomic observation:

> When people ask me what I have learnt from Popper and Hayek I frequently reply by saying that *I learnt from Popper that we never know what*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we are talking about, and *I learnt from Hayek that we never know what we are doing* (425).

As if that were not alone enough to warrant the purchase price, towards the end one finds some provocative thoughts on cultural and intellectual evolution and the differences between them. The evolution of ideas may be propelled by deliberate (rather than random) production of variation, followed by the elimination of falsity and of poor fit, and the survival of alternatives. The richness of these non-eliminated alternatives may stimulate further evolution of ideas.

In trying to make an estimate of evolutionary epistemology we may want to consider a much earlier attempt to apply Darwin beyond biology: evolutionary anthropology. This held that human society, being an exosomatic adaptive mechanism, must have reached its present diverse forms by evolutionary adaptation. Perhaps, it was thought, among present diversity were "survivals" of earlier eras that could provide clues to the evolutionary path.

Although evolutionary anthropology was vigorously rejected in this century by—among others—Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, this was not because they denied evolution. What they denied was the value of evolution in solving anthropological problems. The reason was that cultural variations are virtually endless and, like the peacock's tail (this volume 144–45), seem to proliferate beyond what could be explained by evolutionary pressure. On entering a mosque a Muslim removes his shoes; on entering a church a Roman Catholic woman covers her head. One helpful way to explain these culturally diverse practices is as structurally very similar: the mosque/church is a special space requiring a special gesture; for explanatory purposes it matters little which, as long as the gesture is one of respect, respect to God's house by those who believe in him. The change in dress also marks a change in the social status of the person crossing the threshold. The *social functions* of the different cultural gestures are identical. Whereas the evolutionary explanation is historically specific, viz. "why shoes?"; an explanation from social structure sees both shoes and head cover as specific cultural forms of a widely found practice of marking changes of status with changes of dress.

The relevance of this is as follows: evolutionary pressure no more explains all the features of our culture than it explains all biological features. Hence evolutionary epistemology—the program to anchor epistemology in evolution—is not to be confused with sociobiology—the program to reduce sociology to (not anchor it in) biology. What

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

evolutionary epistemology provides is a general means of integrating the phenomenon of human knowledge and culture into an overall evolutionary understanding. There remains the detailed work that is the study of general forms of social structure to explain unintended features of social life; and there remains above all the realm of intellectual problems, some of them of great evolutionary urgency (e.g. causes of environmental degradation), and others of relatively little urgency (e.g. the design of a new art gallery). One problem that is treated as urgent in this book, yet which it is hard to treat as such within an evolutionary framework, is the persistence of anti-realist thought in philosophy. Either it persists and recurs because it serves some evolutionary purpose, or it is one of those features of culture which make no difference to survival.

NOTES

1. Sir Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1959).
2. Sir Karl Popper, "The Bucket and the Searchlight: Two Theories of Knowledge", Appendix 1 to *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).
3. Sir Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1945).
4. See his "Philosophy of Science: A Personal Report," first published in 1957 and reprinted as chapter 1, "Science: Conjectures and Refutations," in *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).
5. Sir Karl Popper, "Evolution and the Tree of Knowledge," chapter 7 of *Objective Knowledge*.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Sir Karl Popper, "Le Rationalité et le Statut du Principe de Rationalité," in Emil M. Claasen, ed., *Les Fondaments Philosophiques des Systèmes Economiques* (Paris: Payot, 1967), 142–50. An English translation is in David Miller, ed., *Popper Selections* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
8. W. W. Bartley, III, *The Retreat to Commitment* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1962; second edition La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1984).
9. Sir Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, 267–8.
10. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lee Cronk

HUMAN HISTORY AS NATURAL HISTORY

DESPOTISM AND DIFFERENTIAL REPRODUCTION: A DARWINIAN VIEW OF HISTORY

by Laura L. Betzig

Hawthorne, New York: Aldine, 1986. 171 pp., $24.95

The question of the relevance of natural selection to the study of human physical variation has been with us ever since 1871, when Darwin published *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. The question of the relevance of natural selection to human behavioral and cultural variation, however, was not given much serious, sustained attention until the advent of sociobiology in the mid-1970s.

In 1975 Harvard biologist E. O. Wilson published *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*. Although almost the entire book was a textbook-style summary of theoretical population genetics and ethological data on animal social behavior, the last chapter dealt forcefully, and controversially, with the subject of natural selection and human social behavior.

The appearance of Wilson's book roughly coincided with the publication of several influential essays by University of Michigan biologist Richard Alexander.[1] Also published in 1975 was what could be seen as the first fieldwork-based paper on human sociobiology, by anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon.[2] Chagnon inadvertently hit upon one of the key ideas of evolutionary genetics—that nepotistic behavior should correlate with genetic relatedness between individuals—in a study of village fissioning among a group of South American Indians. The net result of all these developments was the introduction to an-

Lee Cronk is visiting scholar at the department of anthropology, University of Cincinnati.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thropology of a new way to study human behavior, society, and culture.

At least three distinct approaches now exist that can be traced, at least in part, to those origins. The "dual inheritance" school, led by L. Cavalli-Sforza, M. W. Feldman, R. Boyd, P. J. Richerson, and Richard Dawkins,[3] looks at culture traits as heritable units analogous to genes. Such traits, or "memes," in Dawkins's terminology, vary and are subject to differential transmission. In other words, innovation and accidental changes in ideas and knowledge take place, and some such innovations and changes are learned and spread in society and some are not. Hence cultural transmission of information is seen as analogous to, but separate from, genetic transmission. People in this school see culture—ideas, knowledge, customs, manners, etc.—as their subject matter, and they study it as a collection of trait frequencies, as geneticists study Mendelian populations. In a recent study of cultural transmission among a group of pygmies, for example,[4] individuals were questioned about their skills, such as net hunting, and from whom they were acquired. The goal was to see if different sorts of skills are passed in different ways. These researchers are not primarily concerned with the actual behavior of human beings, i.e., what they do day-to-day.

Charles Lumsden and E. O. Wilson have developed a similar but distinct approach, called gene-culture coevolution. They focus on "epigenetic rules," defined as the "genetically determined peripheral sensory filters, interneuron coding processes, and more centrally located cognitive procedures of perception, learning, and decision making."[5] Such rules determine the likelihood that particular culture traits will be transferred. So far this approach has inspired less research than the other two discussed here.

The third approach was developed largely by Richard Alexander, Napoleon Chagnon, William Irons, and their students and close colleagues. Unlike those in the two other schools, they look primarily at people's actual behavior, rather than at their knowledge and skills. In so doing they are following the lead of students of animal behavior, and many of their studies are similar to those of ethologists. They often use studies of animals as models for their own studies of humans. Their goal is to develop a theory of human motivations and behavior based on knowledge of how natural selection has shaped us in the past and may continue to shape us in the present. Rather than examining how hunting skills are passed between generations of pygmies, for instance, they would try to use evolutionary theory to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

understand what motivates pygmies to choose net hunting, bow hunting, spear hunting, or whatever, in particular situations. People in this school tend to try to avoid labels, but lately "behavioral ecology" has become popular.

These three approaches are not necessarily mutally incompatible. To a large extent, they simply have different subject matters. In fact, it is difficult to find subjects that they all have something interesting to say about: what interests one does not necessarily interest the others. But they do compete for funds, for attention, and, perhaps most importantly in the eyes of the participants, for the right to see themselves as the truest Darwinists. Laura Betzig is firmly in the camp of the behavioral ecologists. With the publication of *Despotism and Differential Reproduction,* she has contributed a great deal to her colleagues' claims to be Darwin's direct intellectual descendants.

The Politics of Reproduction

The basic project of all human behavioral ecologists, Betzig included, starts with the proposition that humans are the products of a history of natural selection, attempting to see how much light that fact sheds on modern human behavior. These sorts of studies tend to be of one of two varieties, corresponding to the two basic imperatives of all life: stay alive and reproduce. The first is centered on economic behavior, especially that of foragers. A great deal of work has been done among hunting and gathering peoples using models borrowed from ethology. The most notable such model is the idea of optimal foraging, developed by Eric Charnov, who in turn was heavily influenced by the economic notion of marginal value. The second variety emphasizes reproduction and, closely tied to that, social behavior.

Betzig's book is clearly of the second kind. Her goal is to see whether despotism, defined as "*the exercised right of heads of societies to murder their subjects arbitrarily and with impunity*" (emphasis in original), corresponds with efforts by despots to enhance their own reproduction. In other words, has despotic power been exploited to the end of reproduction? More specifically, she lists four "critical questions": How are inequalities in access to and utilization of resources determined? "Do conflicts of interest exist in every human group? Do differences in strength, as the Darwinian hypothesis predicts, determine biases in their resolution? And do these biases, in turn, translate into reproduction?" (20)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The answer she gives is an overwhelming but non-dogmatic "yes." Betzig thoroughly and exhaustively surveyed the existing literature on despotism, using the Human Relations Area Files (a huge collection of ethnographic material) as a guide. She focused on 104 societies that, at the time of observation, still settled disputes internally, rather than through appeals to a higher authority, such as a colonial government. These included both state and nonstate societies. She compiled files on the societies that included information on hierarchical political organization, biases in conflict resolution in favor of those with power (her measure of despotism), the extent to which those who pass judgment on disputes use their positions to acquire wealth ("fines, fees, bribes, and confiscations"), and the maximum size of a man's harem. She then looked for statistical relationships among these variables. The results are clear. Where despots have been present, they have enjoyed an ability to turn disputes among others to their own material advantage, and they have been able to accumulate large harems.

Betzig's review of the literature, which forms the bulk of the book, backs up her statistical findings. In chapter two, "Incipient Assymmetries," she discusses the causes of conflict in stateless societies and reasons for biased outcomes of disputes. The general conclusion is that, for most of human existence, might has made right. And those with might have used it to accumulate wealth and women, even in the most technologically simple "egalitarian" societies.

In chapter three, "Despotism," she asks the question, how often has the ruler's power to inflict fines and penalties upon subjects been abused? She asked this for each of the most hierarchical preindustrial societies in her sample. This included eighteen societies from all over the world and from all of human history, ranging from Babylonia to the Inca Empire, and from Imperial Rome to the Azande of the Sudan. In almost every case, evidence for despotic abuse of power exists. "The conclusion, in other words, seems consistent: men with great power *do,* as Lord Action suggested, tend to exploit it" (61–62, emphasis in original).

They often seem to have exploited their power most spectacularly when sex and reproduction were involved. The Dahomean king, for example, could (theoretically) add any woman in the realm, married or not, to his harem. Accounts of such kingdoms, empires, and chiefdoms commonly refer to rulers with hundreds and even thousands of wives and concubines. They also quite commonly went to great lengths to ensure the fidelity of their wives and lovers. Heavily fortified, secluded buildings for wives and eunuch harem guards are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mentioned often in the literature. An extreme case is the Ashante "dance of death," the sad fate of men found committing adultery with one of the king's wives. Beginning at dawn, the guilty party was led from place to place and progressively stabbed, scraped, and dismembered. Once his ears, arms, legs, eyelids, and buttocks had all been sliced off and he was unable to dance, he was placed on a small pile of gunpowder that was then lighted beneath him. Finally, after dark, he was beheaded. The adulterous wife, her mother, father, and maternal uncle, along with the mother, father, and maternal uncle of the man, were treated more mercifully: they were simply killed.

Darwinism and Marxism

One of the most interesting segments of this book is Betzig's comparison of her approach to the study of political exploitation with those of comparative legal theory and Marxism. In discussing comparative legal theory, Betzig is not at her best. She attempts to summarize and criticize an extremely heterogenous body of literature in only two pages. This cannot be done. One gets the impression that she included this section because she felt she ought to, rather than because the literature on comparative law really has anything interesting to say. She does, however, point out that most comparative legal theorists have been hampered by a lack of any theory of human motivation. As a result, they have been unable to successfully theorize and make predictions about the connections between law and political power.

The discussion of Marxism is much more rewarding. In some ways Darwinism and Marxism are similar. They both concern change, evolution, and conflict. In more important respects, however, they are far apart. Following Lewis Henry Morgan, Marx and Engels theorized that the earliest form of human society was primitive communism, in which both reproductive and material rights were held in common. Darwinian theory, on the other hand, predicts that reproduction is and was always an end of individuals, and that in all societies individuals will differ in their abilities to attain that end. The empirical record goes against the Marxist expectation and supports the Darwinian one: nowhere has a primitive communist society ever been found. Everywhere individuals compete for the means of reproduction, and they succeed to different degrees.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Darwinism and Public Choice

Although I doubt that Betzig herself is aware of it, her approach to politics has a lot in common with that of the public choice school of economics. In a sense, Betzig's work is simply public choice theory taken one step further, past the material motivations of officials to their reproductive motivations, and used to study unfamiliar, non-Western societies. As has so often happened in the past, biological and economic theories converge, illuminating similar subject matters in similar ways.[6]

Clearly, the modern world does not conform to Betzig's Darwinian expectations—at least not at first glance. Why don't Ronald Reagan and William Rehnquist have harems? Why did Gary Hart have to quit the presidential race (at least temporarily)? Betzig attempts to deal with this problem in her last chapter, "Democracy." For most of the history of state societies, there have been correlations among the degree of hierarchical organization, despotism, and differential reproduction in favor of the despot. At some point in fairly recent history, however, things changed. Societies continued to grow more complex, but despotism decreased. Betzig offers a version of special interest group analysis as a possible explanation. She proposes that as the division of labor developed, skills became more specialized, and groups with specialized and useful skills could demand concessions. Mercenaries were successful early in this process, and tradesmen and technicians have followed their lead. The long-term trend has been to eat away at the privileges of power, including its sexual and reproductive prerogatives. This theory is undeveloped, but it would seem worthwhile to investigate the historical relationships among technology, the division of labor, and individual equality.

Such a research program might help us deal with a problem in classical liberal social theory that was discussed in an earlier volume of this journal (Spring 1987) by Robert Antonio. Antonio states that Hayek's "vision of a progressive movement toward society based on spontaneous order contradicts the historical trends toward increased bureaucracy, state regulation, and conditioned property rights."[7] If we examine this contradiction using Betzig's insights, perhaps we will find that, paradoxically, these two trends go hand in hand. While people have used a largely spontaneously ordered market process to develop increasing specialization of tasks, a greater division of labor, and greater economic efficiency, they have also used the power they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

derived from this economic system in the political realm. Often, they have used their political power to attack the economic system that made it possible. Thus, Betzig's line of reasoning may jump the gap Antonio sees between Hayek's evolutionism and the emergence of the democratic welfare state.

Another, potentially more interesting question to ask in light of this book would be not why Ronald Reagan doesn't have a harem, but rather why Mikhail Gorbachev doesn't have one. Or Castro. Or Stroessner. Why doesn't despotism coincide with differential reproduction in the modern world?

The first answer to come to mind is that such men may very well have access to lots of women, but we cannot know. Such matters are easier to keep quiet in a closed society than in an open one. Second, and probably more importantly, even if such societies are despotic, it is a despotism of bureaucrats, not of autocrats. Perhaps no single person in such a system, not even a party secretary, can feel quite powerful enough to abuse his post in such an envy- and resentment-provoking way. And, third, such societies do have complex divisions of labor. It may be that groups with special skills there can exert pressure on the despots in ways analogous to those they use in Western democracies.

Betzig's book demonstrates the usefulness of the Darwinian approach to human affairs. Although it is specifically about despotism and reproduction, in a more general sense it is an examination of human political inequality: why can some people use violence against others in their own social group with impunity, and what motivates them to do so? The advantage of the ultimate-cause orientation of the Darwinian approach is that it leads one to ask such basic, simple, naive, and often overlooked questions.

NOTES

1. See R. Alexander, "The Search for an Evolutionary Philosophy of Man," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria* 84 (1971):99–120; "The Evolution of Social Behavior," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 5 (1974):325–383; and "The Search for a General Theory of Behavior," *Behavioral Science* 20 (1975):77–100.
2. N. A. Chagnon, "Genealogy, Solidarity and Relatedness: Limits to Local Group Size and Patterns of Fissioning in an Expanding Population," *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* 19 (1975):95–110.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3. See L. L. Cavalli-Sforza and M. W. Feldman, *Cultural Transmission and Evolution: A Quantitative Approach* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981 [Monographs in Population Biology, no. 16]); R. Boyd and P. J. Richerson, *Culture and the Evolutionary Process* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); and R. Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).
4. B. Hewlett and L. L. Cavalli-Sforza, "Cultural Transmission Among Aka Pygmies," *American Anthropologist* 86 (1986):922–34.
5. C. J. Lumsden and E. O. Wilson, *Genes, Mind, Culture: The Coevolutionary Process* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).
6. It is interesting to note in this context that the only living scientist I know of to publish in both fields is Gordon Tullock, who has contributed articles to the *Journal of Theoretical Biology* and the *American Naturalist,* among others.
7. Robert J. Antonio, "Reason and History in Hayek," CRITICAL REVIEW 1, no. 2 (Spring 1987):67.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

David Ramsay Steele

HOW WE GOT HERE

THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION
by C. R. Hallpike
New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. 426pp., $59.00

CULTURE AND THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS
by Robert Boyd and Peter J. Richerson
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. 339pp., $29.95

Functionalism is one of the reigning myths of our time. The paradigm of a functionalist is the social anthropologist who observes an exotic tribe with apparently crazy customs, and then comes home and explains how these customs are really superbly adapted to the welfare of the tribe. In a typical example, members of one community of hunters (the Montagnais of Labrador) determine the direction in which they will set off looking for game by holding an animal shoulder-blade over heat until it cracks. The pattern of cracks tells them the direction. O. K. Moore (quoted by Hallpike, 116–17) interprets this as a randomizing technique, though Moore accepts that the hunters have no idea that this is what it is. Moore argues that any systematic pursuit of clues to the animals' whereabouts would give the animals the opportunity to learn how to anticipate the hunters' movements. The hunters' false theory that cracks in the bones can tell them where the game is located is actually an efficient way to maximize the long-term yield of game, by preventing the emergence of a locational pattern to which the animals could adapt.

David Ramsay Steele is the author of the forthcoming book *Marx and Mises: Communism and Economic Calculation* (Open Court).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Characteristically, no attempt is made by functionalists to test this theory, by actual comparison of the effectiveness of randomized versus non-randomized hunting. Nor is there any attempt to explain how it is that the great majority of hunting communities do *not* employ any such alleged randomizing technique. Nor is there any attempt to explain how such a fortunate method could be guaranteed to be hit upon unconsciously. Nor is any serious attention paid to an alternative interpretation: that the hunters who use bone-cracking to find game are just making a mistake, acting upon an erroneous theory, in much the same way that some people consult horoscopes and others adopt functionalist theories of culture.

The Poverty of Functionalism

Many anthropologists go to their fieldwork completely sold on the idea that the culture they are about to study is made up of efficiently-adjusted components, like the parts of a watch, and that it is the anthropologist's job to determine just what the 'functions' of the various parts are. As Malinowski put it: "in every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea and belief fulfills some vital function, has some task to accomplish, represents an indispensable part within a working whole" (quoted in Hallpike, 95). Anthropologists are disinclined to find that they are studying people who do many things for mistaken reasons, and that this explanation is sufficient. Since almost any social arrangement that can be imagined will have *some* benefits to *someone,* it is quite easy to dream up 'functions' for anything. This all-purpose applicability and irrefutability is enhanced by the ambiguity of the functionalist theory. For instance, is the 'function' to increase the welfare of the members of the community, or to perpetuate existing social institutions?

The functionalist outlook spills over from anthropology into other areas, and also infects the popular conception of biology, according to which evolution has occurred so as to guarantee the welfare of large populations of organisms. In some cases, this takes the form of species patriotism; it is widely supposed that the function of reproduction is to ensure the survival of the species, and that the function of mortality is to prevent overpopulation. In other cases, this form of biological functionalism (or providentialism) manifests itself as devotion to the welfare of all living things. Thus, the function of Canadian wolves is to keep the caribou fit and healthy by preventing overpopulation and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

weeding out the weaker individuals. The function of earthworms is to aerate the soil and mix it thoroughly with decaying vegetation, so that agriculture is made easier. Given such elfin views among the populace, it is hardly surprising that some people conclude that the function of the AIDS virus is to discourage rectal intercourse, or that the function of nuclear war is to cure the world's overpopulation crisis.

A good example of vulgar functionalism in popular attitudes to social institutions can be found in the popularized teaching of Christian theology, where it is explained that the old Jewish law, with its intricate regulation of diet and other matters, was functional for a primitive Middle-Eastern tribe. The dietary restrictions, it is somewhat obscurely hinted, were health measures, no longer necessary with modern sanitation and refrigeration. Thus both the old Law and the modern neglect of it are given a scientific validation. But it seems obvious that obeying the instructions of Leviticus will be deleterious and crippling for any society (except in the sense that individuals may derive satisfaction directly from following these instructions), and in this case there is no good reason to doubt that the obvious is correct. (Naturally, with regulations so numerous, a few of them will by chance have some beneficial results, and some of them may incorporate bits of primitive knowledge about the effects of various foodstuffs.)

Functionalism seems to be congenial almost right across the political spectrum. Among conservatives, functionalism harmonizes with the notion that society is an organic unity transcending individual reason. The Hayekian version of functionalism, even more brazenly fallacious than most, is eagerly embraced by many conservatives, and has introduced an irrationalist strain into the thinking of some libertarians. To rely upon science or reason to redesign traditional institutions is held to be dangerous "constructivist rationalism." Society has its reasons, which Reason knows not of. Among Marxists a sort of historicist functionalism tends to prevail, with things going on under capitalism because they are necessary to the survival of capitalism—but not because anyone knows this. Somehow, the sociological entity 'capitalism' instinctively looks after itself, a doomed and bad-tempered but highly purposeful beast. More fundamentally, certain functionalist assumptions seem to be inherent in the materialist conception of history. Perhaps the greatest tribute to functionalism, however, is the growing use of the term 'dysfunctional,' which means: 'having consequences I dislike.'

Of all anthropologists, the one who has done most to challenge the loose thinking of the functionalists is C. R. Hallpike, whose argu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ments are presented afresh in *The Principles of Social Evolution,* along with much new material, including an attempt to explain certain features of human culture which might at first blush seem to demand a functionalist explanation.

Hallpike's antifunctionalist case is, aside from a very few details which may need sharpening up, virtually watertight. He shows the implausibility of most of the "adaptationist" scenarios by which social institutions would be made functional (though I question some of his criticisms of this "adaptationism"; see below). He exposes the incoherence of the view (Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown) that social systems have 'needs' (86 ff). He refutes the theory that warfare among tribes is an adaptive device for adjusting population to resources (105–113).

One form of "adaptationism" is the view that the mode of subsistence, the way people get a living, determines or greatly influences the rest of the social organization. Hallpike tests this hypothesis by cross-cultural comparisons, and finds that, for most cultural traits, there is little or no consistent relationship. He classifies 113 societies by mode of subsistence (gathering, hunting, fishing, pastoralist, and three types of agriculture), codes each society for each of 14 features of its institutions, and then tests for correlation (150–165). The results go against the theory that a society's organization is heavily determined by its environment or mode of production. Hallpike concludes that primitive social organization is extremely open and underdetermined: that on the one hand any one of a great range of alternatives will work about equally well, and on the other, there are certain simple forms of organization which are likely to arise in any society, no matter what its method of subsistence.

Social scientists generally believe that primitive societies are tightly-adapted, efficiently-organized structures, and they have managed to sell this theory to a large portion of the public, but they do not normally extend this to their own society, which typically they see as jam-packed with dysfunctions, especially of the sort that require advice from social scientists in order to be cured. Somehow, the automatic forces ensuring functional efficiency are thought to have been destroyed by the juggernaut of capitalism. Hallpike instead advances the highly suggestive, and I think possibly correct, view that primitive societies can be organized in a great variety of possible ways—almost anything will do—while advanced societies are far more constrained. (The design of a paperweight is presumably less determined than that of a car, and arguably that of a car less than that of a spaceship. This principle suggests the possibility that there may be only *one* way to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

organize a *very* advanced society.) The functionalist illusion arises, in part, because anthropologists read the usefulness of institutions in their own society back into those of primitive societies.

One variant of functionalism is the view that the religious or magical theories held by individuals in a particular culture are actually 'about' the social relationships of that culture. Thus the anthropologist Fortes could make the preposterous statement that "The Tallensi have an ancestor cult . . . because their social structure demands it" (124). This sort of thing reminds me of the comical Jungian idea that the theories of the alchemists, admittedly inaccurate as representations of chemical substances, were actually extraordinarily accurate depictions of the human psyche. A few years ago I saw a TV documentary about the Amish. The documentary gave absolutely no information about the ideas of the Amish, their religious reasons for rejecting much modern technology, for example, but obligingly translated these into sociologese and social-workerese, cant about tradition and social relationships, which the writer of the documentary knew to be what the Amish were really trying to tell us. Fortunately I was able to decode the Amish documentary correctly: it was really expressing something about the social structure of college sociology departments and TV networks.

Survival of the Mediocre?

Hallpike rightly insists that people's ideas are not determined by the social structure, and will themselves have effects on social institutions. But he seems to under-rate the importance of ideas in influencing social development, and the extent to which the evolution of ideas exhibits adaptiveness (122–138). This is connected with what Hallpike claims to be "one of the fundamental principles of social evolution," "the survival of the mediocre" (113). He provides some good examples of technological devices which survived for many centuries even though, with hindsight, they were dreadfully and obviously inefficient (114–116). However, the term "survival of the mediocre" suggests that the mediocre possesses some advantage over the more efficient, which is not borne out by Hallpike's argument. His principle might better be called 'survival of the optimal,' with the proviso that what hasn't yet been tried cannot survive. (I don't mean optimality in the sense of 'optimal to an omniscient intelligence,' which is never achieved nor closely approximated, and is therefore a red herring.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What applies here to the making and use of tools, applies to other systems of ideas too.

Although I do not doubt that, as Hallpike says, many historical technologies were capable of great improvement with only a little insight, we have to be cautious about making such judgments. The fact that one technology succeeds another and seems an 'obvious improvement' does not show that it could advantageously have been made earlier, if only someone had thought of it. This is especially so if the new technology requires more investment. Hallpike gives the example of the Oldowan hand axe, which remained in use for well over a million years before being replaced by the Acheulian flint axe about half a million years ago. It is not self-evident that the Oldowan axe survived so long merely because no one thought of a better design. Perhaps game was so abundant that most of an animal could be discarded, and later became less abundant. While the flint axe could be used to do new things, such as cutting wood, it had higher production costs, requiring more work and expertise to manufacture. The flint axe, though sharper, was also more fragile, and required more frequent maintenance and replacement. Flint was probably scarcer than pebbles or cobblestones, and would have necessitated living near chalk beds, or being linked by trade with those who did. Perhaps there was eventually an increased demand for wood-cutting, or increased availability of time to spend making flint. (Stone Age axes were produced in large factories with specialized capital—tools just for making tools—and distributed hundreds of miles away by trade.) We should look at the 'obvious' explanation that no one had thought of an improvement earlier with the same skepticism we should show toward myths like little James Watt watching the kettle-lid. Furthermore, both the Oldowan and Acheulian axes underwent continuous, though very slow, improvement in design detail—a fact which does not harmonize well with "survival of the mediocre."

Cumulative Rational Selection

It appears from several passages, but especially his remarks on Durkheim (94), that Hallpike sees only three alternatives: 1. that people employ techniques and perpetuate institutions because they can perceive and understand the advantages of them; 2. the view implied by functionalism, that there is some mysterious process, in which intelligent insight plays no part, which guarantees that techniques and institu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions are advantageous or even optimal; 3. that any advantage or benefit is due to pure chance. But there is a fourth possibility, which may be thought too obvious to need pointing out, but which Hallpike's argument often seems to leave out of account. I will here call it "cumulative rational selection" (I have elsewhere referred to it as "cumulative trial and error." See "Hayek's Theory of Cultural Group Selection," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 8, no. 2).

If we find a tribe using optimally weighted and balanced, aerodynamically sophisticated feathered arrows with points and barbs made from some carefully processed substance admirably suited to this purpose and a shaft made from the best possible wood available, we do not conclude that some super-genius of a tribal engineer invented all this in one afternoon, or in a lifetime, nor that the arrow design appeared by a mysterious process in which conscious intelligence played no part, nor that this arrow design was adopted by pure chance. The arrow in question is the result of a process lasting millennia, in which innovations were made within a tradition of arrow-making. Some departures from tradition could be incorporated into the tradition and thus preserved. This process requires that people should, most of the time, copy the existing pattern without fully understanding it—a perfectly sensible thing to do, since they can see that this pattern (embodying the results of generations of past improvement) is more effective than anything they could have personally invented. But the process also requires that changes should occasionally be accepted and retained. For the process to be progressively advantageous, there must be some relationship between an innovation's benefits and the likelihood that it will become part of the tradition, and there is such a relationship: people can discern what works better. People who use arrows know what arrows are for, and they can tell a better arrow from a worse one. (In situations where they cannot—where benefits are hidden, or where individuals hold a mistaken theory which leads them to think that something works better than it really does—cumulative rational selection will not be progressively advantageous.)

Cumulative rational selection in the evolution of tools has some of the characteristics of Darwinian selection, and was in Darwin's mind at the time he wrote *The Origin of Species*. ("Almost every part of every organic being is so beautifully related to its complex conditions of life that it seems as improbable that any part should have been suddenly produced perfect, as that a complex machine should have been invented by man in a perfect state." Near beginning of Chapter II,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

page 58 in Mentor edition.) An artifact may have many advantageous features that no one in the community understands or knows about. The process of evolution of an artifact, such as an arrow, is consciously guided by no one. Picturesquely, and at some risk of being misunderstood, we may say that an artifact or technique contains the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the ancestors. Yet at each stage the process depends upon rational evaluation of effectiveness. The whole process is a form of 'natural' selection, but each stage in the process (unlike genetic evolution) depends upon literal selecton (except in the possible but certainly not predominant case where accidental, unnoticed changes are preserved merely because they fail to force themselves on the attention of the individuals concerned; here it should be noted that conscious attention is still important, in the form of a filter). Just as Darwinian theory requires that the adaptations of living things have come about by natural selection of genes—and thus rules out many possibilities which would have been useful, but could not arise because no natural-selection route was available—so cumulative rational selection cannot be used to account for the occurrence of practices where no plausible cumulative-rational-selection route exists. An arrow can be explained by this hypothesis, but not bone-cracking as a randomizing device, because no succession of intermediate steps, each perceived to be effective, could have led to that outcome.

I agree with Hallpike that generalizations can be made from technology to social institutions. In fact I think that all beliefs and institutions can be seen as instruments enabling people to get what they want. "Mediocrity" explains nothing, since it means no more than 'progress which, with benefit of hindsight, seems rather slow.' This may just be an anachronistic or ethnocentric judgment; where it is more than that, it calls for a historical explanation (Why didn't they discover improvements? Or if they did, why did the tradition resist modification?)

Cumulative rational selection applies to all aspects of culture—to religious and kinship beliefs, for example. Hallpike fully acknowledges that institutions prevail only because they "are perceived as useful by individual people" (214). He apparently views this as a transparent commonplace which cannot take us any further, and turns for help to "the structural properties of each society's institutions and their developmental potential," abstracting from people's motives. Structural properties are seen as the sole source of those important features of institutions which individuals do not understand. This overlooks the fact that institutions are continually subject to evaluation and modi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fication, and that this process may produce adaptive features which no individual comprehends.

There are many reasons why cumulative rational selection, though it is a strong adaptive influence, cannot result in anything approaching the optimality implied by functionalism. People often make mistakes, employing an erroneous theory of what works. Different institutions tend to evolve piecemeal; hunting technology and marital relationships will be adapted and improved largely independently, with little thought to their compatibility, which is, as Hallpike rightly says, not much of a problem anyway, since a great range of marital systems are, as far as anyone can tell, all equally compatible with a given method of hunting. (Still, there will be some modification of institutions to render them more adjusted to others.) Changes in circumstances may make yesterday's practices ineffective. A community may by chance be 'trapped' in a set of practices which are not particularly fruitful in permitting new advantageous developments. And so forth. Recognition of cumulative rational selection permits a modest form of adaptationism which does not rest on mysterious or providentialist scenarios, and does not entail the extravagancies of functionalism.

Cumulative rational selection requires that individuals hold a theory of what a technique or institution is for, and so are able to recognize whether something works well or badly. It ranges from groping, unreflective 'trial and error' to deliberate innovation after careful investigation, but it always presupposes 'rationality' in the broad sense that individuals employ means to attain their objectives, and are capable of choosing one means rather than another because they judge that their objectives will be better served by the former. Humans in all times and places are rational in this broad, general sense, and therefore cumulative rational selection is always a possibility. (As with Darwinian selection, prolonged stasis also requires an explanation: some process must be weeding out deleterious mutations, and that process in human culture is application by individuals of shared rational means-ends theories.)

Hallpike's Core Principles

Having dismissed all "adaptationist theories," Hallpike requires an alternative way of explaining how societies develop. A key element in his theory is the notion of "core principles," which he elucidates by a comparison of the histories of Chinese and Indo-European society. Drawing heavily on the writings of Dumézil, Hallpike argues that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

many significant features of modern European and European-derived societies can be understood as continuations of the institutions of the prehistoric Indo-Europeans. For example, Indo-European society, unlike Chinese society, has a high regard for war and warriors. Indo-Europeans saw society as composed of three essential segments: farmers, fighters, and priests, a conceptual division which is absent in other societies, and which has re-surfaced repeatedly among Indo-Europeans over the millennia.

The theory of "core principles" is like historical materialism or Weber's theory on the relationship of Protestantism and capitalism: it is easy to find striking confirmations, but difficult to test the theory, since just what would count as a refutation is elusive. And Hallpike gives his theory that great advantage which Marx and Weber gave theirs: a passage where the theory is so heavily qualified as to be all but taken back (370). Like all such ambitious theories some rather general statements can be drawn from it which are certainly true, and perhaps worth saying: that ideas or institutions may tenaciously survive numerous upheavals and social revolutions over thousands of years, a fact which itself tends to refute the functionalist notion that the parts of a social system are well-adapted to each other (or does it?).

The core principles are a mixed bunch, and it seems that they could be just a catalogue of those things which happen to have survived. If that is what they are, then it is, of course, no surprise that they have survived. Perhaps everything exerts some influence, and the influence exerted by those things which have survived a long time has been important just insofar as they have survived a long time. Hallpike does not explain how the core principles are determined, where they come from, or why they stay around. The Indo-Europeans were polytheistic, but they became converted to monotheism. Why? They were adherents of sacred kingship, but they became secular-minded republicans. Why? Are these core principles which were dropped or does their abandonment show that they were never core principles?

Hallpike suggests that the liberal political doctrine of separation of powers is rooted in the Indo-European tripartite view of society, the connection being "the idea that society is inherently composed of different functions, which *must not* be performed by the same people" (342). I said above that it is easy to find striking confirmations for these kinds of theories, but I should add that their devotees will always manage to sniff out confirmations that are far from easy to find, or even recognize once found. If this kind of breathtaking leap were performed by a sociobiologist or cultural-selectionist, how scathing Hall-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pike would be! The connection is remote and altogether dubious, and one can immediately call up a dozen equally plausible connections with other factors—one might say, for instance, that the separation of powers is rooted in Christianity, and I can imagine a pedantic epigone of Hallpike's arguing about whether 'Render unto Caesar' came from the Semitic or Indo-European strands in the New Testament.

Core principles apparently "are more resistant to change than others, and exercise a general regulatory influence" (288). But it is possible that something is resistant to change because it is inert and adapts itself with little resistance to whatever is happening, i.e. exercises no general regulatory influence. (Writing from left to right, or right to left, is extremely resistant to change, but conceivably it has very little influence on social development.) Suppose that I instance Russia as an exception to the tripartite view of society, since Russian farmers, many of them virtual slaves, have been treated so terribly and not granted any respect or recognition. Possible Hallpikian responses might be: 1. that the landowning aristocrats represented the food-producers in the tripartite scheme, or 2. that leading Russians often waxed sentimental about the sacred virtues of the peasants. Either of these would suggest that the tripartite view were inert and accommodating rather than regulatory. An alternative would be to admit that in many Indo-European cultures the tripartite scheme has been as absent as in many non-Indo-European cultures.

It is suspicious that the Indo-Europeans are compared with the Chinese, who have been ruled by a single state for so long. Since the Chinese have been dominated by a single state staffed by conformist scholars, and therefore a single broad tradition of ideas, some peculiarities of Chinese institutions may just represent the 'fixing' of elements that happen to have been associated with that one state. Similarly, we could take a single Indo-European society and quite easily define its core principles with emphasis on those that were distinctive, and do the same for the remaining Indo-European societies taken collectively. In this way we could plausibly contrast the core principles of Russian, or Iberian, society with those of Indo-European society. The only reason we cannot do this is because we happen to know that Russia and Iberia are Indo-European. We could equally well take 'Mediterranean society,' aggregating its Indo-European and Semitic elements, and probably find many common features, contrasting with those of either Northern Europe or sub-Saharan Africa. This sort of exercise is made much easier because, on Hallpike's own showing, many of the "Indo-European" core principles occur separately in some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

non-Indo-European societies, and do not manifest themselves in some Indo-European societies. My impression is that Japanese society sits more comfortably with his Indo-European than with his Chinese core principles.

Hallpike maintains that common linguistic origins between societies will be a comparatively good predictor of other forms of institutional similarity (370), implying that this substantiates the influence of core principles. But all this would show would be that some practices could survive a long time. It then automatically follows that there will be correlation of practices among those communities of common descent or subject to the same cultural influences in the past. This doesn't support the view that any of these practices regulate or dominate the others, or in any way form a "core." To take a trivial instance, there is an extremely strong correlation between those communities using an Indo-European word for 'one' and those communities using an Indo-European word for 'two', but this doesn't indicate that either word regulates the other, or that there is any necessary or intrinsic connection between the two.

The Market and the State

Hallpike gives considerable attention to the origins of the state, which he views as a test case for his contention that social evolution can be directional without being adaptationist. He concludes that the state could have arisen by various different routes. (I will not comment directly on his discussion of state-formation, which would require an extended and specialized analysis, but his observations will have to be taken seriously by all students of this problem.) In the course of his argument he advances the principles of "multiple properties" and "equifinality" (209–213).

Equifinality means that different routes may lead to the same destination (as with the invention of agriculture and the origin of the state). Multiple properties means that institutions have many properties, some of them unsuspected by individuals in the society. Hallpike appears to think that much more can be deduced from these two principles than seems to me to be possible. He states that "Because certain institutions . . . have multiple properties, there is a high probability that they will occur frequently" (211). This simply doesn't follow—the number of properties (even the number of *desirable* properties, which is not what Hallpike says) has no bearing on how frequently an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

institution will occur. And the principle of equifinality doesn't explain how similar institutions are arrived at by different routes: If there is a great number of alternative potential institutions which can be reached by a great number of alternative routes, the upshot should be a great number of actual institutions—not, as Hallpike implies, a smaller number than if each of these alternatives could be reached by only one route. On the other hand, a small number of alternative potential institutions would help to explain the independent emergence of similar institutions (120), but in that case equifinality is redundant. Having rejected all "the various selectionist and adaptationist theories of social evolution" (375), Hallpike turns to such principles as equifinality and multiple properties to account for the directional character of social evolution, but these principles are quite impotent to yield direction without being supplemented by some element of adaptationism.

Hallpike seems to misconstrue the role of the market in social evolution. He even seems to regard the market as an ancillary of the state (256). But the market predated the state by many thousands of years, and the market is of special interest because it is 'functional' in the sense of having a tendency, under certain restricted but not fantastic conditions, to reach optimal outcomes without anyone consciously aiming at them. As cumulative rational selection is able to crystallize the knowledge gained successively by many generations, so the market is able to crystallize the knowledge gained contemporaneously by many mutually distant communities.

Hallpike states that trade can arise only when there is a surplus (256), a statement one often encounters, but which doesn't become coherent, let alone true, by being affirmed. He quotes someone else quoting Karl Polanyi to the effect that ancient traders weren't like modern traders (257). What seems to be true is that the earliest empires regulated trade and gave monopolistic privileges to particular people, but there was no doubt an underground or black economy upon which the state regulation was erected, just as there is in present-day Italy or Burma. The market displays precisely the same laws wherever and whenever it occurs; for example, a good harvest means lower food prices.

An Inadequate Critique of Adaptationism

Hallpike's long second chapter opposing the application of quasi-Darwinian notions of "adaptiveness" to social evolution is the weak-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

est, although I think that most of his broad conclusions here are correct. He tends to lump together all the differing adaptationist approaches, often making criticisms which apply only to some of these approaches. He should have classified different kinds of adaptationist arguments, then dealt with them separately. Thus, there is a big difference between arguing that social structures are genetically adaptive and arguing that they are adaptive in the sense of serving the subjective needs of individuals or the survival demands of institutions. Different considerations are relevant to adaptiveness for individuals, for genes, for little groups, and for big groups. There are major differences between arguing (as some sociobiologists do) that social practices serve genetic adaptiveness, arguing (as other sociobiologists, such as Daniel G. Freedman do) that practices serve some kind of "holistic" group adaptiveness, and arguing (as Cavalli-Sforza or Dawkins do) that practices are themselves subject to natural selecton for their fitness at replicating themselves culturally. Hallpike emphasizes that among many primitive social groups there is little competition; but there could be fierce competition among forms of behavior without much competition among individuals or groups. He tends to misrepresent Richard Dawkins's position (in *The Selfish Gene*) by discussing Dawkins's argument in the context of the genetic adaptiveness of individual behavior in recent human society. Dawkins actually takes the view that human cultural evolution has become to a large extent autonomous, guided by memes rather than genes.

Aside from this, many of Hallpike's anti-adaptationist arguments just don't have much force. Arguing that cultural transmission is not analogous to genetic inheritance, he points out (44–46, 55–56) that human activity is structured, and that therefore individuals do not adopt practices or memes in isolation, but he doesn't identify specifically how this differs from the case of genes. An animal has a life-cycle, it has feeding and reproductive behavior, it is part of a population which is part of an ecological community, all highly structured. This doesn't mean that talking about one gene and its effects is of no explanatory value, and certainly not that it in any way contradicts the description of the animal's behavior. A way of building an arch fits into a complicated social structure, but this doesn't mean that it is of no explanatory value to talk about the transmission and natural selection of a particular way of building an arch, and certainly not that this in any way contradicts the whole theory of architecture in a given society, or the purposes for which humans erect buildings. The structure is itself dictated by genes/memes, and the environment of a gene/

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

meme is mainly other genes/memes. The fact, for instance, that one kind of variation of a particular practice would 'make no sense' in a particular structured context, and therefore would hardly arise, is analogous to the fact that many genetic mutations are simply breakdowns to be eliminated.

In his contentions that structures are important, Hallpike is groping for a sound argument against complete reliance on natural selection of memes but he has not managed to frame it accurately, perhaps because he wants to do too much: to rule out all (natural-) "selectionist" theories completely. It may be promising to develop a reconciliation between structured institutions, especially those structured by purposes, and natural selection of culture. (Whether such a reconciliation would merely find a place for natural selection of culture in the spaces left by purposive action and conscious scrutiny, or whether purpose and consciousness could be brought within a general theory of natural selection of culture, I am not sure.) Just as we do not expect genetics to *supplant* descriptions of goal-seeking behavior in animals, but rather to shed light on them, so natural selection of culture may help to illuminate purposive action and structured institutions.

Hallpike claims that there is no evidence that memes exist, since there are no criteria for identifying them, "unlike genes, atoms, and molecules" (45). This is strange because: 1. for a long time genetics developed without any idea of what genes actually were; their existence was imputed in order to explain their effects, and their effects constituted the only empirical evidence for their existence (the same applied to atoms; as with genes, there were some people who argued that they were merely useful fictions); and 2. if it is impossible to identify a cultural unit, what is Hallpike doing all through this volume, where he talks about Oldowan axes, the East Cushitic *gada* system, or Indo-European sacred kingship?

Hallpike states that social evolution is quite unlike biological evolution because the latter requires that the organism be adapted to an environment "which *is not itself changed* by this adaptation," whereas in social evolution "we have a continuous process of *mutual adjustment*" (36, and see 208). But this sort of thing happens all the time in biology. For instance, an animal living in an arid environment becomes more efficient at extracting water from the environment, making it more arid. Or a beaver constructs dams, leading to a transformaiton of the landscape, with wider and deeper waterways. Again, Hallpike makes much of the fact that for natural selection, variation has to be blind (50–55), whereas in human society it may be the result of conscious ac-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion. Hallpike has a good point here against those cultural-selectionists who argue or imply that cultural variation has to be completely random, or that new discoveries are always accidental. But there is no need for variation to be entirely random for natural selection theory to have some explanatory value. When geneticists studying fruit-flies deliberately stimulate certain kinds of mutations by, for example, radiation, this does not mean that the usual corpus of neo-Darwinian theory has to be abandoned. Nor would this be the case if humans started to control their own evolution by genetic engineering or by deliberately stimulated mutations plus artifical selection. This would mean that an adequate account would have to include this conscious policy of control, but humans would still be subject to Darwinian selection for survival of the genetically fit. The two theories—natural selection and artificial selection—would have to be integrated to give an adequate account. This leads directly to another problem with Hallpike's discussion: he tends to assume that if he can show the great importance of processes which (he thinks) are quite different from and pre-empt natural selection, then natural selection is of no importance. But it is possible that human culture has evolved partly by quasi-Darwinian and partly by other mechanisms. These mechanisms may exist side by side, and may interact. This 'all or nothing' assumption is a mistake also often made by Hallpike's sociobiologist or cultural-selectionist opponents.

Natural Selection of Culture

The book by Boyd and Richerson (B&R) gives grounds for questioning Hallpike's sweeping dismissal of selectionist theories, though Hallpike's book also calls into question many of B&R's assumptions. Each of these books is a fine corrective to the other. B&R are concerned with natural selection of cultural traits. (In "natural selection" I include all processes where there is non-contrived differential survival of replicating entities, which may include hair styles or hymn-tunes. Unfortunately B&R employ the term in a more restricted and somewhat arbitrary sense.) They proceed by examining different scenarios of cultural selection, in the form of simple mathematical models. As far as I could tell, though, there is no mathematical mystification. The models are used to test the scenarios, and to generate sometimes unexpected results. Everything makes sense verbally. Not only is this work a systematic exposition of almost every simple mode of cultural trans-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mission yet proposed; it fits them all together into a coherent typology, and it treats many positions in social theory from the culture-selection standpoint. The theories of 'human sociobiology' and those of the cultural symbolists are all brought within the range of different models; the circumstances in which they might hold are identified, and criticisms made of each.

Guided Variation

The book is really divided into two parts. Chapters 1–6 develop the cultural transmission processes B&R term "guided variation" and "direct bias." Chapters 7–9 explore the possibility of other kinds of cultural transmission. Guided variation and direct bias do seem to be very important, but the authors assume too readily that these processes are likely to work toward genetic adaptiveness. They therefore turn to the other processes in part to find possible explanations for genetically maladaptive cultural practices. I think they overlook the extent to which human cultural and intellectual evolution is cut loose from control by the genes. Therefore, their approach is unnecessarily elaborate; they strain to find sophisticated explanations for facts that can be explained more simply.

Following Rosenthal and Zimmerman, B&R explain guided variation as follows (80, 95–98). Suppose that an individual becomes a castaway in a strange, new, unknown environment. That individual could try to learn the best way to get along by individual trial and error, but if there were other people living in that environment, it might be less risky to observe them closely and copy their behavior. The new-born child is indeed a castaway in a strange, new, unknown environment, and the infant may benefit, therefore, from imitating his elders. This assumes that the elders are doing better than acting as an uninstructed newcomer would, and this seems plausible if we assume past trial-and-error learning. The picture is one of individuals copying the traditional practices of their society, and making some changes—which can then be copied by others, notably their offspring.

Is B&R's "guided variation" the same as what I have called "cumulative rational selection"? It seems so on its first introduction (9), where B&R mention the importance of "rational calculation" which, however, they distinguish from "trial and error." But thereafter, rational calculation is largely ignored, and trial and error comes to be inter-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

preted as entirely non-rational. The reader gets the impression that, without being given a systematic examination of rationality in human affairs, he is being softened up, as B&R's argument develops, to accept the notion that humans are scarcely rational. The main rhetorical device to this end is the familiar one of appealing to an impossibly sophisticated model of rationality, in this case the Bayesian model (87–94).

In their discussion of guided variation, B&R tend to overlook—perhaps they even intend to deny—the fact that the process depends at each step upon rational evaluation. Their position is somewhat obscure; it could be that they are endeavoring to describe an abstract, unconscious process, which they accept will be heavily supplemented in practice by intelligent deliberation, creative thought, and deliberate testing. However, this is far from clear, and there are indications that they wish to resist this interpretation, which would greatly limit the applicability of their models.

I contend, against B&R, that guided variation or cumulative rational selection immediately establishes the possibility of cultural evoluiton in a genetically deleterious direction. An individual may prefer one practice over another because he judges that the preferred practice helps him better achieve his goals, yet it may not be conducive to the maximum spread of his genes. B&R seem to resist this conclusion, and make unnecessary difficulties for themselves, because of their presumption that guided variation must have genetically adaptive consequences or it would not have come to prevail.

Biased Transmission

Suppose that there are various alternative and mutually exclusive practices in a given generation of adults. The newcomer or infant has to copy one of several possible alternatives. If the child copies either one parent or the other, with a 50% likelihood of each, the results for cultural transmission will be closely analogous to genetic inheritance. Another possibility is "direct bias": the child imitates (not necessarily from its parents) the practice the child finds most attractive, perhaps by testing out each practice, perhaps not. "Indirect bias" arises when the child chooses whom to copy by some other criterion: choosing whose hunting practices to copy by looking at who brings back the most game, or who is the tallest, or who has the longest beard. An example of "frequency-dependent bias" would be always to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

copy the most common of the rival practices. Direct, indirect, and frequency-dependent bias can all be observed quite commonly in various cultures.

Purposive Behavior in Cultural Evolution

B&R play down the fact that all these transmission processes can operate by means of rational appraisal. Moreover, in many cases the imitator has to grasp abstractly what the practice is before he can imitate it. Imitation requires understanding the 'point' of what is imitated—not necessarily the 'real' point, but some kind of imputed point, at least. What is transmitted culturally is not merely a series of actions, but also the meaning or point of those actions, the intention behind them.

Consider the making and use of a bow and arrow. Does anyone suppose that this complex series of operations could have come about without the individuals concerned having some idea of what it was for? The technology is so complicated that some minute divergence from the appropriate procedure would render the entire, highly expensive process totally ineffective. On the other hand, quite substantial departures from tradition could be incorporated by a person who knew what he was doing. The more elaborate the series of actions, the more likely it is that some slight change, in the actions or in the environment, will cancel all or much of its effectiveness. But if the individual has an intellectual insight into the point of the actions, enabling him to tell whether they are working well or not, considerable variation is possible without disastrous results. It might be pointed out that very complex series of actions sometimes are transmitted genetically in some animals, but in that case individual variability through trial-and-error learning must generally be reduced to within very narrow limits. Once an organism has evolved some way along the path of a rigid genetically-programmed complex series of actions, the complexity of the pattern will itself intensify the pressure against any variation: the organism will increasingly become locked into rigid patterns of behavior which discourage the plasticity necessary for cultural transmission.

It would be futile to try to explain the evolution of bow-and-arrow technology without reference to the *intentions* of the hunters. As Hallpike has perceived, the fact that humans do things on purpose limits the scope for explaining the determination of culture purely by unconscious transmission processes; perhaps ultimately the main explana-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tory arena for some of the scenarios outlined by B&R will be found to be those cultural practices which no one considers of any importance, and especially, those cultural practices which are subliminal, which no one notices, like certain grammatical features of language of which the language-users are oblivious.

Some element of natural selection of culture will enter wherever the transmission of an idea is governed by a factor other than the ostensibly most important one. For instance, some things are easier to memorize than others (often for genetic reasons). This influence must often have prevailed at a cost; the 'Rule of Three' in early arithmetic and notions like the Kuhnian 'paradigm' among present-day intellectuals are concepts which manage to survive and reproduce themselves more because of their ability to stick in the mind than because of their ability to do the analytic job ostensibly required of them. On the other hand, it would be silly to omit the fact that one idea sometimes does displace another because it works better according to the overt intellectual standards applied. To expect to explain exhaustively all of human behavior by natural selection of culture is like assuming that Greta Garbo must have slept with thousands of directors.

Insofar as large complexes of practices are held together by some scheme or theory (which may, for instance, be a spirit-filled community cosmology), the elements of the scheme will have a rationale within the scheme, and will be resistant to spontaneous or 'natural' selective pressures. Part of what Hallpike is getting at in his criticisms of selectionism is that it would be curious, for instance, to theorize about selective pressures for the common practice of putting oil in the car. Any such influences on putting oil in the car, or failing to do so, must conform to an explanation which refers to the rational means-ends scheme. A society which left it to the unregulated forces of natural selection to have any significant part in determining whether oil gets put in the car could never develop the production and use of cars. The same tendency of a rational scheme to dominate explanation by natural selection of cultural practices holds equally well for those schemes which are mistaken, or whose evaluation is less straightforward. A society which had to leave it to natural selection of culture to decide whether baptism were conducted with water or with sand would never have developed Christianity.

Imitative behavior is a subsequent and more elaborate development of individual learning based on individual evaluation. Learning by imitation is founded on individual learning by trial and error—even though, from the viewpoint of an individual human, it may super-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ficially appear that the reverse is true, since imitative learning is so important in human infancy. As imitative learning arises out of individual trial-and-error learning, and never eliminates it (even in infant imitation, individual trial and error is at work), individual learning is always liable to be directed by individual evaluation.

B&R seem to think that guided variation and direct bias would cause all cultural groups to respond in the same way in the same environment (157–160). If so, they are mistaken. Take guided variation. One individual improves an inherited practice; later his son copies it, then improves it a bit more, and so on. There are obviously different ways of improving something. A knife can be improved by being made more quickly, being sharper, sturdier, and so forth. An individual in one tribe may notice an improvement that no individual in another tribe happens to notice. Once some variations have appeared through chance, others will appear, not only through chance, but also because the cultural context helps to determine what constitutes an 'improvement.' Furthermore, we are dealing with 'improvements' as judged by the individual at the time, and he may be mistaken in his judgment, or he may apply standards different from those prevailing in another culture. We are dealing with successions of improvisations, and it should be clear that, from the same starting point, two chains of improvisation can turn out entirely differently. Guided variation alone could in principle lead to virtually indefinite divergence in cultural forms.

Human cultural transmission is never exact, because in order to imitate something effectively you have to possess some understanding of it. You have to form a theory of what the meaning or essence of the practice is. In acquiring that understanding, you make it your own. No matter how orthodox and conformist you may strive to be, you cannot avoid innovating, perhaps in very small ways. Commenting on the paradox implicit in the fact that many individuals can learn 'the same' language, J. N. Hattiangadi (*How is Language Possible?*) points out that they do no such thing; they each learn a different language, which however has many points of similarity or overlap with the languages learned by the other individuals in the community. What Hattiangadi says about language applies to all cultural practices. Strictly speaking, there is no 'Nuer kinship system'; there are as many Nuer kinship systems as there are Nuer. The Nuer kinship system is an abstraction of some of the features common to the beliefs of all Nuer, or to most of them.

B&R seem to assume that rationality and conscious choice are in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

imical to stability of cultural transmission; but this is not always so. A person may abandon traditional ways because of rational reflection, yet rationality also helps to explain the stability which exists. If people lost any intellectual grasp of the point of making and using bows and arrows, and somehow kept on imitating these behaviors blindly, then accumulation of random variations would soon make these operations unrecognizable. Instead, an intellectual grasp of the point of bows and arrows is the core of continuity and cohesion in the practice of making and using these implements. The persistence of perceived meaning helps to stabilize human culture.

Are People Rational?

B&R survey the evidence from behavioral decision theory showing that "humans ordinarily make quite poor judgments" (168). This body of findings, they conclude, "paints a depressing picture of human decision-making abilities" (169). As they acknowledge, the decision-making procedures of ordinary people can be defended on various grounds; for example, it is sensible to employ a crude rule of thumb if it is right a lot of the time and cheap to apply. But this is not the main point. The question is whether rational choice is an important factor in human affairs, not whether it is commonly executed with virtuosic brilliance. The fact that people are *stupid* should not blind us to the fact that they are *rational*. It is a popular theory that people are very clever but highly irrational; I think this theory could only have been devised by people who are rational but not very bright.

The importance of rationality in culture helps to answer the question posed by B&R (130–31): Why is culture so rare in non-human animals? An animal with little insight into what it is doing can easily waste its time if conditions are not exactly as they were in the evolutionary past, as when a cat of my acquaintance scratches furiously at the tiled floor near her litter box. Protracted series of actions are highly vulnerable to slight departures from past conditions, but this can be compensated by the animal's having general goals to which it can adapt the details of the actions. If the animal knows what it is doing, it can pursue elaborate series of actions (as when a chimpanzee uses a stick to get a fruit out of reach) without being locked into them genetically, and the actions can be varied considerably and still be effective.

Once we acknowledge that people are rational, some of the distinc-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions made by B&R lose their precision and force. They make a sharp distinction between individual trial-and-error learning and cultural transmission, to such an extent that they counterpose "learning" to "culture," which is odd since culture is usually defined (in the social sciences) in terms of learned behavior. But learning by imitation is a certain kind of learning by trial and error. The child is not a passive receptacle for culture, but an active explorer, all the time trying to get satisfaction, trying out the available options to see what works. The difference between direct bias and guided variation is not very fundamental: in both cases, an individual evaluates two or more rival practices and chooses the one that she likes. Indirect bias is not so very different from direct bias: in either case a fallible judgment is made about whether a practice is worth adopting. B&R counterpose rational action to cultural transmission (40), but they make no attempt to argue that the transmission of culture is not made up of rational decisions on the parts of both teachers and imitators. As their own introduction to guided variation implies, a rational decision-maker who found himself suddenly stranded amid a strange culture would find it useful to learn its traditions. Since it generally pays the individual to imitate, and since there are demonstrable cases where individuals fail to imitate when it doesn't pay, rational decisions alone are sufficient to explain the existence of cultural transmission.

In turn, biased transmission and guided variation are together distinguished from "natural selection," defined by B&R as "all the things that happen to an individual because it performs a given behavior, and that, in turn, affect the probability that the individual will be available as a model for naive individuals" (175). Suppose an individual does something that results in his being consigned to a despised group of outcasts. This is 'not being available as a model' yet its effects are cases of biased transmission. The term 'guided variation' is itself somewhat misleading, since although each variation is chosen (literally selected), the cumulative process of many variations over many generations is not guided by anyone. Thus 'guided variation' is no more guided than 'biased transmission,' and both of them are forms of natural selection. B&R seem to want to emphasize the distinction between natural selection of cultural traits through reduced fertility and death of humans, and other kinds of natural selection of culture. But if we are going to take cultural transmission seriously, we must view the cultural practices as the relevant organisms or replicating entities, and the humans as aspects of their environment. To a meme, as to a flea, it may not be very important whether it kills a human; the meme's progeny may be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able to jump to many other humans before being adversely affected. (In some cases, humans have been especially imitated after, and because of, their deaths.) Parasites may change the behavior of their hosts, but it is probably not very common for parasites to pursue their own interests by the indirect route of causing their hosts to reproduce faster. In some cases, memes may flourish by increasing the genetic reproductive performance of their human hosts. This is a special case, and only one part of the explanation of cultural change. Probably no one believes that the future of the United States belongs to the extraordinarily fertile Hutterites, though it is reasonable to suppose that the Hutterites will become a more important factor in American life.

Cultural Selection Is Not Genetically Adaptive

Guided variation and biased transmission will spread the variants favored by accumulated choices and by bias. In no way can this outcome be equated with genetic fitness. If people don't know what's good for them, or if they define 'good' in ways other than spreading their genes as widely as possible, then these forms of cultural transmission could favor behavior which was extremely maladaptive (though it is adaptive *for the memes*). The elaborate lengths B&R go to in order to develop models which favor genetic unfitness are therefore not as important for their argument as they imagine, interesting though some of them are. B&R take the view that "if the only forces which shape cultural evolution are guided variation and directly biased transmission, [cultural transmission] would seem of little consequence; in the end, the only organizing force in cultural evolution would be natural selection acting on genetically transmitted predispositions . . . we would be able to predict cultural variation by asking what increases genetic fitness" (157). It is possible that I have missed something in their argument, but this conclusion appears to be plainly wrong. Guided variation and direct bias will go their own way, producing some behaviors that are adaptive, others maladaptive, and others neutral (for the human individuals or for human-carried genes; human intelligence and rational choice may do better than randomly at making behavior 'adaptive' in the sense of serving human purposes, though this may well be hostile to genetic fitness). It would be quite easy to model the spread of tobacco-smoking, for example, by these mechanisms, and although smoking might, for all I know, be genetically adaptive, we cannot safely conclude that it is.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What led B&R astray? I think part of the answer is that they are trying to do two things at once: on the one hand, to explain that guided variation and direct bias will work, and what sorts of things they will do, and on the other, to account for the origin of the potential for guided variation and direct bias, i.e. to find under what circumstances natural selection would have yielded genes favoring guided variation and direct bias. This seems to be an unfortunate approach. It is easy to see that giraffes have long necks, much more speculative and risky trying to figure out how and why their long necks evolved. If there were a dispute about exactly how long their necks were, it would not be very helpful to decide the matter by conjectures about the optimal length favored by selection. This is like trying to decide whether a crime was committed by speculations about the identity of the criminal and his motive. In numerous cases the adaptive 'reason' for some feature of an organism, or even whether there is such a reason, remains mysterious or controversial. It should be possible to decide whether transmission by guided variation or direct bias does occur, and what its effects are, independently of speculation about how, or if, they could have been genetically advantageous.

Furthermore, most of the cultural evolution we are concerned with has taken place within the past 10,000 years or so, and we do not have to assume that the human genetic capacity for learning and invention has changed much during that period, though the social environment of the genes has changed greatly.

It may seem plausible that the great expansion of human population during the past several thousand years owes a lot to culture, but that may have no bearing on adaptiveness, which is a matter of frequencies of competing genes. A population can benefit from a trait which is reproductively harmful to each bearer of the trait. And if an individual makes a cultural innovation which enhances that individual's reproductive performance, but the innovation spreads sufficiently rapidly that numerous competing individuals soon benefit from it, then the innovation may have impaired the genetic fitness of the innovator.

Cumulative rational selection is made up of developments which help individuals to attain their goals. If we suppose that when the capacity for pursuing goals by rationally-understood methods first developed, it was adaptive, this is no guarantee that it will continue to be adaptive in new situations. With the development of culture, pursuit of individuals' goals might become increasingly irrelevant to genetic fitness, even if we supposed that the goals themselves were unchanged and genetically determined.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Once a species has developed some way along the rational-cultural path, it makes little sense to speculate about the possibility that a specific behavior could be selected for genetically. It is probably now impossible for a new specific behavior to become established in humans through genetic selection.

Individual and Cultural Learning

Cultural and individual learning are not as separable as B&R seem to think. Given certain plausible conditions, the capacity for individual learning will automatically become the capacity for cultural transmission. This fact casts doubt on B&R's discussion of genetic selecton between cultural and individual learning, treated as simple alternatives governed by a pair of alleles. Given rationality, a certain degree of intelligence, and gregariousness, the great importance of culture will emerge almost automatically, because individuals will perceive it to be advantageous to copy practices with visibly advantageous outcomes, and to introduce changes in these imitated practices if the changes are thought to be improvements. If, as seems quite likely, rationality, intelligence, and gregariousness could each arise for reasons unconnected with the benefits of cultural transmission, then any further search for a biological origin of culture might be redundant; the genetic capacity for culture might have arisen without any selection for cultural transmission per se.

All learning is, of course, individual learning. However, following B&R in distinguishing 'cultural' from 'individual' learning (using 'individual' to mean 'non-cultural'), we can see that cultural learning can be advantageous only because what is learned culturally has a good chance of being advantageous. Yet this is the case only because past individual learning has been incorporated into the tradition of cultural learning, and this fact presupposes that the tradition admits some innovations derived from individual learning. Therefore, cultural learning is viable only as a supplement to individual learning; it cannot stand alone. Culture not guided by intelligent individual evaluation would just drift into senselessness.

B&R seem to think that any form of cultural transmission can itself become an object of genetic selection, but this is surely dubious where it implies selection of the conclusions individuals will draw as a result of rational processes. An individual who can learn either to hunt or to farm, to honor his neighbors with gifts or collect their heads to deco-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rate his front door, can surely learn, alternatively, to copy the tallest man, the best hunter, or the majority, or to decide what to do in fireside discussions. If you can learn what to do, you can learn how to choose what to do. This is not to deny that there might be genes affecting cultural transmission; there might, for instance, be a 'conservative' gene making people more inclined to stick with tradition and less inclined to innovate, and a 'radical' allele. However, it is a truism that individuals or communities can change the way they make such choices, can change their decision-making rules in response to changes in circumstances or beliefs. A highly tradition-bound society may rapidly become more innovative after exposure to new ideas. Rules for making choices are themselves chosen. Rules for cultural transmission are themselves culturally modified. Furthermore, the extent to which a community is prepared to generate and accept innovations, and the kinds of innovations it will generate and accept, could be a purely rational strategy adjusted to recent experience of success or failure; in that case we would expect to find that 'innovative' societies are societies adjusted to conditions where a high rate of innovation pays, and 'tradition-bound' societies are societies adjusted to conditions where a low rate of innovation pays.

Providentialist Thinking

B&R seem to have imported from anthropology or from pop biology something of the functionalist or providentialist point of view. They tacitly assume that because something is prevalent and important to us, it exists for reasons intimately connected with that importance. But it may be that some human capacity which we value is just an incidental outcome of some other element which was selected for (along the lines of Williams's conjecture, in *Adaptation and Natural Selection*, about the origin of human genius). There could have been very strong selection for some feature of the human central nervous system, which then gave rise incidentally to greatly expanded possibilities for culture. It could be, for example, somehow highly advantageous for individuals to communicate by means of a conceptual language. Once in place, this would necessarily and immediately permit many kinds of behavior which might not be adaptive. The main genetic influences in cultural evolution could be remote and quite incidental, yet inevitable, consequences of some turn in genetic evolution taken for quite unrelated reasons. Similarly, many land animals can learn to swim if their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

environment changes to make this advantageous to them in pursuit of their goals, such as feeding or satisfying their curiosity. That a cat, a dog, or a monkey can learn to swim, and could under appropriate circumstances adjust to a life in which swimming was vitally important, does not require any theory that these animals have been selected in the past for the ability to swim. They just can swim. It's a stroke of luck, not an adaptation. Human culture is today greatly affected by literacy and electronic media, yet no one supposes (at least, I hope they don't) that print and broadcasting have appeared because they were selected for genetically. (It is possible, of course, that there may have recently been genetic selection for literacy, though this would have to be shown. It is just as likely on the face of it that there has been continuous selection against literacy since literacy began, if it has been the case that illiterates have had more kids, though I am afraid that this will not do as an excuse for state schooling.) What goes for books, radio, and TV may very well go for some cultural transmission processes which have been operative since before the dawn of history.

As an example of providentialist thinking, consider B&R's reference to celibate communities such as monasteries (202). If the celibacy rule is enforced, and if behavior is subject to selection solely for genetic fitness, it might seem that the appeal of the monastic life ought to have been eliminated, except on the wildly improbable theory that celibates are somehow able to help their close kin reproduce, to such a degree that this outweighs their own infertility—this has actually been proposed by one theorist (R. D. Alexander, quoted by B&R, 202)! B&R suggest that although living in a monastery is genetically maladaptive, it may be culturally adaptive, since monks are freed from the cares of family, and thus enabled to devote their energies to spreading their ideas. They make up for their lack of genetic offspring by begetting numerous cultural offspring. This is typical providentialism—looking for some way in which living like a monk is adaptive. Such ingenuity is wasted; there simply is no reason whatever why monasteries should be adaptive, genetically or culturally. Monasteries could keep going indefinitely even if their members were *less* able to spread their ideas, because monasteries are part of a wider religious culture, and in that religious culture monastic life is honored. If quarterbacks turned out to be below average in both fertility and persuasiveness, we would not deduce a trend toward 10-member football teams.

A determined search for adaptiveness is often misplaced, for example in the pursuit by some writers (not B&R) of an adaptive function for homosexuality. If you program something as subtle as mating

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

behavior into a tiny bit of DNA there are liable to be glitches. If you design a pack of cards that will yield a variety of good hands, it will also probably yield some disappointing hands. (The fact that homosexuality is not adaptive should be suggested by the fact that it occurs in all mammals, and possibly in all sexually-reproducing animals. If it made some contribution to fitness by way of behavioral interaction, you would expect to find, given the great variety of behavior in different species, cases where homosexuality did not turn up, because in that particular context fitness did not result.) Genetically-favored behaviors may never have had any adaptiveness; it is not adaptive for a moth to fly into a flame. However, a genetically-determined behavior which may have been adaptive in the past may now be maladaptive or neutral. Sociobiologists are quite right to point out the enormous importance of genetically-favored behavior patterns among humans: sexual jealousy, aversion to incest, greater aggressiveness of males compared to females, greater ease of learning to form sentences than learning to do arithmetic (even though the latter is intrinsically much simpler than the former)—all these and many more genetically-favored tendencies help to shape human society. Where sociobiologists often err is in assuming that there must be some adaptive explanation for present institutions which result in part from these genetic influences. By "present" I mean any time within the past few thousand years. Since culture changes the situation in which genetic forces operate, the results may be quite unlike what they were in the past when these tendencies were selected for. In any case, there will always be incidental effects (just as the red color of blood is not in the least adaptive); a combination of genetically-favored behaviors will give rise incidentally to other behaviors, not themselves adaptive. So a genetic, or partly genetic, explanation of a cultural institution does not mean that the institution makes a contribution to genetic fitness; this is not even particularly likely.

Public Goods and Group Selection

B&R present an argument on public goods and group selection, discussed in terms of "rational, selfish individuals voluntarily cooperating to produce public goods" (227–29). They contend: 1. that there are serious public goods problems, such that certain important goods would not be produced at all by rational, selfish individuals; 2. that institutions actually exist to provide these public goods; 3. that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this must require altruism; and 4. that general altruism (directed towards non-kin) requires to be explained by group selection. Every step of this argument is wrong.

First, real-life public goods problems are generally of the sort where a good will be *under*produced, not totally *un*produced. B&R give an example of two pastoralists who may choose to guard or not guard their jointly-pastured herd, but their example is unusual in that in it, externalities lead to no guarding at all: in this case, guarding is a pure public good. This is a peculiar and unlikely case: it is more realistic to suppose that there will be *some* guarding of herds, albeit less than the optimum quantity of guarding. But the peculiarity of their example is then assumed by B&R in all their subsequent discussion. Naturally, this leads them to suppose that something other than rational selfishness is causing so many vital public goods to be produced, when in fact it could well be that these goods are underproduced, just as the theory of rational selfish action would predict. They then tend to assume that altruism causes public goods to be produced, via such organizations as cartels, labor unions, and the state. But cartels cannot be made to work except where it pays for each firm to participate and collusion can be policed effectively, so that it is in the rational selfish interest of all the individual firms. Successful cartels without government support are rare and short-lived for this very reason: they break down because of internal cheating. Unions do provide an increased wage to their members (at the expense of other workers) and B&R make no attempt to show that the benefit the union provides the individual member is less than the cost of joining the union, and therefore that union-joining is altruistic.

B&R assume that where there is a gap left by selfish, rational action, this is *in fact* generally made up by some form of altruistic cooperation, and they puzzle over why this should be the case. But it can easily be shown that it is generally not the case—that is, there are numerous instances where the public good is undersupplied, just as the theory predicts. A simple example is over-fishing of commonly-owned fish populations, such as the now-extinct sardines which once kept in business the now-defunct cannery on Cannery Row. The public good of production of future fish through conservation of present stocks was undersupplied; no altruism prevented the competing fisheries from fishing the sardines to extinction, a manifestly inefficient outcome. Such examples of underproduction of a public good are commonplace.

There is a public good element in 'law and order,' but also a large

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

private good element. If I pay a security firm to watch my house, this will incidentally provide some relief from thieves to my neighbors; they will then free-ride on my provision of law and order, but notice that though this will diminish the amount they spend on law and order, it does not mean they will spend nothing. Generally, when the state takes over production of some service, output of that service tends to fall, and there is no reason to doubt that state provision of police protection is less than private provision would be. There may be someone who believes that the state altruistically makes up the difference between the law and order that would be provided by selfish, rational action and the social optimum, but I have never met him, and I'm quite sure he doesn't live on the south side of Chicago.

Group selection is like ESP; it shouldn't be appealed to until more mundane explanations have been tried. People are sometimes altruistic to strangers, and sometimes to thousands or millions of anonymous strangers, as when they donate to charities, vote in elections, or volunteer to stuff envelopes for world peace or the rights of animals. To place this in perspective, we should remind ourselves that most people, most of the time, do not behave like this. A Chicago economist once discovered empirically that people are 90% selfish, 10% altruistic, and that sounds about right. There is a rhetorical sleight-of-hand by which B&R insinuate that "voluntary large-scale co-operation" is altruistic, but of course, most voluntary large-scale co-operation has no obviously altruistic component. The extraction, processing, and distribution of petroleum and petroleum products is a gigantic example of voluntary large-scale co-operation, mostly undertaken by individuals who seem to be in it for the money and other personal benefits. But why do some people some of the time (a few people a lot, a lot of people a little) do things out of a generalized altruism directed at large groups of non-kin? I don't see any great difficulty about this, perhaps because I have really digested the facts that culture is an autonomous process not dictated by genes and that rationality is an autonomous process not dictated by genes or culture.

Until Neolithic times, people lived in small groups composed largely of kin, and loyalty to these groups was justified by individual reproductive profitability. Since people can learn novel behaviors, and form theories which guide their actions, there doesn't seem to be any problem about loyalty to the small group being transferred to larger groups, once these larger groups emerged, and on balance, there is no reason to think such loyalty would be fiercely selected against. Altruism is further developed by an interpersonal chain reaction of individ-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ual rational calculations, which works roughly like this: 1. If other people mean me harm, they are a threat to me, and I will therefore punish any manifestation of harmful intent, and reward any manifestation of benevolent intent, especially if I can do it cheaply (e.g. by frowning or smiling); 2. I very much like other people to like me, e.g. to smile at me and speak softly rather than to glare at me and yell, so I will make it clear to people that I mean them well; 3. Since it is advantageous to me (in a presumptive, residual sense, when I have no overriding personal interest in the contrary) to adopt a general policy of showing that I mean other people well, and encouraging other people to show that they mean me well, I can combine both goals by subscribing to an ideology that says everyone ought to mean everyone well.

No doubt there are other explanations, some of them cultural-selectionist. Thus, when various religions were in competition, there would be an advantage to those religions which had a universal message for all mankind: these religions would win in competition with other religions which confined themselves to a particular group or locality.

There are formidable obstacles to group selection as a source of specific genetic adaptations, but even more difficulties arise when group selection is supposed to operate on the culture of human groups, for example: 1. Most groups are made up of smaller groups, and it is important for the welfare of a group that its sub-groups behave differently from each other. This means that there may be sub-groups with differential fertility, yet the welfare of the sub-groups with higher fertility may be dependent on the behavior of the sub-groups with lower fertility; and 2. If there are two groups, one of which behaves more adaptively than the other, this will very likely be due to better rational choices by the individuals in the first group. In that case there will be no selective effect whatsoever, genetic or cultural, for any specific behavior. There will simply be selection for greater rationality or intelligence, whether genetically or culturally transmitted; superior rationality or intelligence leads to quite different behaviors on different occasions.

Sources of Human Action

In order to give satisfactory explanations of the development of human society, several different kinds of explanations, derived from dif-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ferent disciplines, must be drawn upon, notably: 1. genetic influences; 2. natural selection of culture; 3. rational pursuit of goals; and 4. interpersonal invisible-hand processes of the kind studied in economic theory. At present there seem to be a number of scholars actively trying to fit as much as possible into one or two of these categories, often with an audacious disregard for fairly obvious objections. This is probably more productive than aiming for an eclectic stew in the same cavalier spirit, but maybe people in these warring camps will eventually see the limitations of their monomaniacal approaches, and a soundly-based eclecticism will emerge. Even now, the ways in which these different kinds of explanations interact and limit each other is a fascinating field for critically-monitored speculation. For example, B&R discuss the implications of conformity for cultural transmission, but they do not touch upon the way in which trade encourages diversity of human groups because of the advantages of division of labor, and therefore stimulates nonconformity both within and among communities.

Aside from their argument on public goods, B&R generally do a very good job of spinning out the implications of their models. (A curious omission from their nearly exhaustive survey is what happens when two cultural traditions fuse. A well-documented case is the colonization of Pitcairn following the *Bounty* mutiny, producing a selective blend of English and Polynesian practices which was then perpetuated in isolation. Fusion might make people choose among traditions by out-of-the-ordinary methods, and although comparatively rare, might be of importance in global cultural evolution.) B&R are much more shaky when it comes to arguing for the applicability of their models. Empirical examples can be found which can be reconciled with their cultural transmission scenarios, but B&R apparently cannot supply a single clearly-established case of corroboration of a surprising or bold prediction, nor even a promising candidate for such a case.

When B&R's attention turns to doubts about the applicability of their models, they resort to facile remarks. Attacking "anti-adaptationists" who appeal to accidental evolutionary breakthroughs, B&R refer to "our understandable desire to see humans elevated somehow above the common run of beasts" and assert that "such hypotheses provide too convenient a way to rescue the assumption that humans have transcended nature" (282–83). Come now! Some of my best friends are beasts, but if humans transcending nature means that they operate according to novel principles way beyond the ken of other animals, then this is no "assumption" and it is never likely to need rescuing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

Liberalism in Search of Its Self

TO THE EDITOR:

I found Dennis Auerbach's essay, "Liberalism in Search of Its Self" (Summer 1987), to be most puzzling. If I understand Auerbach correctly, while he believes that Marx and Nietzsche have successfully kicked the props out from under liberalism, he is determined to cling to the notion that liberty remains an attractive form of social organization. I cannot understand why.

Let us assume that the figures he cites have indeed demonstrated the historicity of our understanding and the illusory nature of universal claims. One might be willing to admit that "it is not necessary to deny the historicity of our understanding or to demand the universal validity of our concepts" (two things that are not synonymous) and yet still affirm liberalism. (Of course, how one could affirm the truth of anything while denying the universal validity of *all* our concepts is beyond me.) But why is it "only necessary," for a continued belief in the validity of liberalism, that we "recognize the liberal vocabulary as the only one which, here and now, offers the possibility of locating in the private man a constraint on the exercise of unlimited political authority and a rationale for challenging the specter of the unbounded state as it has manifested itself in our century"? If the ontological props (individuality, human agency, responsibility, etc.) for liberalism are removed, why should limits on political authority be desirable at all?

Why should "a mere locus" (as opposed to an "ontological entity," whatever such a Greek/Latin redundancy might be) have any "right to self-definition"? Unless Auerbach can give some defense of such a right beyond "a sense of life" (whose?), his argument renders liberalism completely incredible.

I should add that I believe liberalism to be quite credible; I find Auerbach's account of intellectual history less so.

Tom G. Palmer
Arlington, Virginia USA

TO THE EDITOR:

There is a new and unfortunate strain of "liberalism," an anemic liberalism, that has shown its pallid face of late in the pages of journals dedicated to the liberty and dignity of the individual. It is a liberalism that is in eager retreat before fashionable doctrines that claim to eschew universality and absolutes. It

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a liberalism too ready to make concessions even before demanding that the critics of traditional liberalism do more than display their glibness.

One can see this strain in Dennis Auerbach's "Liberalism in Search of Its Self," which might better have been titled "Liberalism in Revolt against Itself." Auerbach parades a line of critics of liberalism, from Rousseau to Foucault, apparently convinced that they have dealt debilitating, if not killing, blows to natural law and natural rights. Yet his article is utterly devoid of any reason to think these philosophers have launched even a glancing blow. He presents only assertions. Nonetheless, Auerbach is making concessions: "In continuing to affirm the liberal vision, it is not necessary to deny the historicity of our understanding or to demand the universal validity of our concepts. It is only necessary that we recognize the liberal vocabulary as the only one which, *here and now,* offers the possibility of locating in the private man a constraint on the exercise of unlimited political authority and a rationale for challenging the specter of the unbounded state as it has manifested itself in our century." (My emphasis. The idea that a *vocabulary* can offer the possibility of locating a constraint in a man is flummery worthy of a sociologist or a congressman.)

Of what import is this "vocabulary" once liberalism has been stripped of its timelessness and universal validity? Why is the liberal "language game" superior to any other? What is it about the "here and now" that legitimates our claim to be free of the state? What could justify the argument that *we* should be free, but not necessarily other human beings at other times and in other places? Why should the disciples of Rousseau, Nietzsche, Marx, and Dewey take that argument seriously? If this is liberalism "invigorated" (as Auerbach puts it), who needs enemies?

The anemic liberal seems to overcompensate for fear he'll be charged with being doctrinaire. The charge need never be proved, however, because the anemic liberal is too ready to plead *nolo contendere* before the indictment is even drawn. Thus Editor Friedman writes in the same issue, "If liberal insights are valuable, it is not because liberalism already embodies truth, but because it can help us discover it." His response to liberalism's alleged identity crisis is to say in effect, "Liberalism can't really have an identity crisis because it doesn't have an identity." (And by the way, what does it mean to say that valuable liberal insights don't embody truths? *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines *insight* as "The capacity to discern the true nature of a situation. . . . An elucidating glimpse." More flummery.)

Liberalism is more hearty than these writers imply. It need not shrink from criticism that is itself dogmatic and self-subverting. At its core, liberalism is that set of truths (not a "vocabulary" or "language game") which holds that the individual is the irreducible unit of social and moral life and analysis, that his rights to his person and property are inalienable and constitute the only kind of political freedom there is, and that societies respecting rights are by nature self-regulating, orderly, and humane. To describe liberalism is to make objective truth-claims that are independent of a particular language, time, or place.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Critics may say that this preoccupation with the individual and his good is *passé,* but they have to do more than make assertions. And until cells or collective minds begin writing political philosophy, I don't know why this assertion is even of interest.

Sheldon L. Richman
Springfield, Virginia USA

DENNIS AUERBACH *replies:*

Sheldon Richman accuses me of advocating "anemic liberalism." On reading his comments and those of Tom Palmer offered in a similar vein, I am struck rather by the anemia of that mode of libertarian-liberal thinking which dismisses the greater part of nineteenth- and twentieth-century critical thought as irrelevant and continues blithely to promulgate a worldview, the foundations of which have been called into fundamental question.

The major accusation against my article is not that it joins Marx's and Nietzsche's critiques of liberalism (I merely present them) but rather that it takes them seriously. The article accepts that Marx and Nietzsche have made powerful attacks on liberalism which mandate a response and possibly a re-evaluation of the liberal position. In the face of these attacks, repeating the natural rights dogma ad nauseam will not do. To people like myself whose worldviews have been substantially shaken by the likes of Marx and Nietzsche, the un-self-critical assertion and reassertion of the classical liberal paradigm rings increasingly hollow.

An unfortunate tactic of head-in-the-sand libertarians is to borrow a trick from Ayn Rand's book and accuse their opponents of being irrational non-absolutists who wish to deny the universal validity of A is A. All arguments which call into question the natural rights theories of the seventeenth century are thus to be laughed off the stage. The fact of the matter is that the liberal discourse of rights and individualism has not existed for all time. This does not, of course, argue against the validity of this discourse but it does suggest that liberal modes of self-description are not "natural," built into the structure of reality itself. Richman will want to interpret this as a claim that "cells or collective minds" rather than individuals inhabited the social world prior to 1688. All I wish to suggest, however, is that people began to think of themselves first as *individuals* only at a particular historical moment.

The idea of the person as an individual who then proceeds to assume various social roles, rather than a mere inhabitor of a given role with no personality which transcends it, became possible in the modern West with the dissolution of feudal relations and the formation of nation-states, which established a legal personality for inhabitants of a geographical region juxtaposed against their various identities as economic agents and members of a family unit. Rather than recognize the newly emerging idea of the individual as a product of historically conditioned social and political relations, however, the classical philosophers of liberalism tried to establish a metaphysical ground

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the abstract individual based upon a notion of man's pre-social nature. They argued that man comes fully constituted into the social world and proceeds to assume various engagements with other fully constituted beings. This pre-social self becomes the right-holder in liberal theory. It is this metaphysical picture of the liberal self which has been attacked with considerable force by Marx and Nietzsche, among others.

Marx and Nietzsche argue that the historically contingent character of liberal man undermines this tremendously complex philosophical construct. If pre-social, ahistorical man really is an empty shell, they claim, then the rights discourse based upon his protection is groundless and rights themselves are illusory. The point I try to make in my article is that liberals need not despair of the fact that liberal man became possible only at a particular point in history, that liberal modes of self-description are not the product of introspective analysis of an ahistorical human nature which we share with all other rational beings. I suggest rather that liberals present the "language game" of private space and the "role" of autonomous individuality as attractive possibilities for self-definition in the conext of our own historical situation.

Liberalism today is quite susceptible to attacks from so-called "communitarian" critics who argue that the liberal right-holder is an alienated self, incapable of finding substantive fulfilment in the social world. The continued insistence of libertarians upon claiming that individuals have rights by nature, period, leaves the criticism that the liberal self is a contingent and, moreover, unattractive role unanswered. My proposal that the liberal self *is* an attractive and necessary role to affirm in the context of contemporary history marks an effort to take up this challenge.

JEFFREY FRIEDMAN *replies:*

Above and beyond their commitment to any political dogma, liberals are committed to seeking truth—which requires a fairminded consideration of anti-liberal criticism. That the editorial statement of this truism proved controversial indicates a confusion between liberalism as a *political* movement, with all the polemics and posturing that implies, and liberalism as an *intellectual* tradition which values, among other things, open inquiry. The strength of conviction that makes for colorful rhetoric and robust political battle all too often leads to flaccid and timorous intellectual habits. A "liberal" with such habits too readily concludes that he possesses a set of "timeless and universally valid truths" that need never be questioned or modified.

The editorial agreed completely with Mr. Richman's dictionary, if not with Mr. Richman: it proposed, as an alternative to dogmatic complacency, that we view liberalism as a set of insights that contributes to our "*capacity to discern* the true nature of a situation"—without already being politically committed to some cherished view of what the truth must turn out to be. The difference between viewing oneself as trying to discover truth and as already possessing it—between liberalism as a "set of insights" and liberalism as a "set of truths"—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is that the former allows the liberal to contemplate the possibility that criticisms of liberalism might be important, maybe even *right*, while the latter makes the liberal think it is somehow appropriate to answer such criticisms by pointing out that if they are right, liberalism becomes "pallid."

I have not been persuaded that Marx and Nietzsche dealt devastating blows to liberalism—like Mr. Richman, I find their critiques self-subverting—but I remain open to the possibility that they are right. For I worry that my disagreement with the critics of liberalism may be grounded in just the kind of "liberal" narrowness Mr. Richman risks advocating. To him, a vast portion of the social and philosophical thought of the past century is not "even of interest." It does not seem to occur to him that the many intellectuals outside the liberal tradition who are as dismissive of liberalism as he is of non-liberal traditions, have usually been moved to close *their* minds by a contempt for liberal ideas every bit as uninformed and self-assured as his contempt for theirs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New Philosophy from Open Court

HILARY PUTNAM
The Many Faces of Realism

"an informed and intensive study of the consequences of the collapse of 'metaphysical' realism and the acceptance of a relativistic or 'internal' realism."
(NELSON GOODMAN)
Cloth $19.95, Paper $8.95

J. N. HATTIANGADI
How is Language Possible? Philosophical Reflections on the Evolution of Language and Knowledge

In the course of his highly original argument, the author criticizes Quine on subjunctive conditionals, Wittgenstein on language use, Kripke on proper names, and Chomsky on universal grammar.
Cloth $29.95, Paper $13.95

JOHN STUART MILL
The Logic of the Moral Sciences

Introduction by A. J. Ayer.
Cloth $29.95, Paper $9.95

PETER URBACH
Francis Bacon's Philosophy of Science: An Account and a Reappraisal

A bold reinterpretation of Bacon, refuting the 'standard interpretation' that Bacon claimed to have an infallible, mechanical method of establishing truth.
Cloth $29.95, Paper $9.95

G. A. WELLS
The Origin of Language: Aspects of the Discussion from Condillac to Wundt

An ingenious defense of the contention of the Enlightenment thinkers, beginning with Condillac, that human language must have been deliberately invented.
Cloth $19.95, Paper $7.95

ANTHONY QUINTON
Utilitarian Ethics

A new edition of Lord Quinton's highly-acclaimed introduction to Utilitarianism.
Cloth $28.95, Paper $12.95

Still Available

W. W. BARTLEY III
Wittgenstein

"A farrago of lies and poppycock . . . filth, pure inventions . . . lack of any facts or proof . . ." This controversial biography has now been completely vindicated. Revised edition with a new 'Afterword: On Wittgenstein and Homosexuality'.
Paper only $9.95

W. V. QUINE
The Philosophy of W. V. Quine
Cloth $49.95, Paper $24.95

BRYAN MAGEE
Philosophy and the Real World: An Introduction to Karl Popper

"an absolutely faithful account of Popper's ideas, presented in delightfully crystalline prose."
(ANTHONY QUINTON)
Paper only $8.95

GERARD RADNITZKY & W. W. BARTLEY III (eds.)
Evolutionary Epistemology, Rationality, and the Sociology of Knowledge

Contributors: Sir Karl Popper, Donald T. Campbell, W. W. Bartley III, Günter Wächtershäuser, Rosaria Egidi, Gerhard Vollmer, John F. Post, J. W. N. Watkins, Gerard Radnitzky, Peter Munz, Antony Flew.
Cloth $39.95, Paper $14.95

PAUL J. GRIFFITHS
On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem
Cloth $24.95, Paper $12.95

JOHN PASSMORE
Recent Philosophers

Accurate survey of philosophical thinking during the 20 years to 1985.
Cloth only $23.95

OPEN ✲ COURT, Box 599, Peru, Illinois 61354
Call toll-free 800-435-6850 (From within Illinois, 800-892-6831)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

transaction

New and Recent Books on Cuba

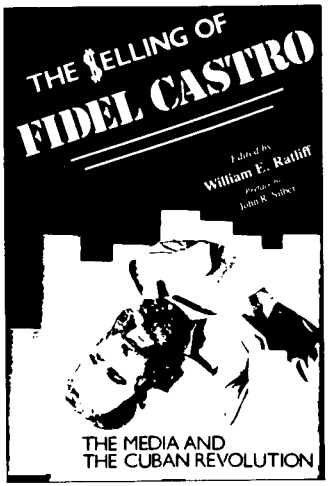
THE SELLING OF FIDEL CASTRO

THE MEDIA AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

William E.Ratliff et al. Introduction by John R. Silber

In *The Selling of Fidel Castro,* sponsored by the Cuban American National Foundation, scholars and journalists examine the role that the media came to play in the Cuban revolution, its impact on the development of U.S. foreign policy, and in the formation of Western public opinion toward Cuba. They ask and answer tough questions about the media coverage of Cuba: Is Castro's charisma enough to suspend the critical judgment of supposedly hardhitting and skeptical journalists? Or has there been a willful suspension of disbelief by the Western press? Finally, was the media's role determinant in deciding the course of the Cuban revolution?

ISBN: 0-88738-104-9 (cloth) **$19.95**
ISBN:0-88738-649-0 (paper) 197 pp. **$12.95**



CUBAN COMMUNISM

SIXTH EDITION

Irving Louis Horowitz

Cuban Communism is the standard reference work and text in the field of Cuban studies. This 744-page compendium features thirty-five distinguished essays, most new, and reflects the rapidly advancing state of social research on postrevolutionary Cuba. A new History section has been added to the four major areas. In concert, they explain the structure and function of present-day Cuba: its economy, society, policy, and military. The sixth edition of this classic work is an indispensible guide through the Cuban labyrinth. It includes every major contributor to present-day Cuban studies.

ISBN: 0-88738-672-5 (paper) 744 pp. **$19.95**

CUBA ANNUAL REPORT: 1985

Department of Research & Policy, Radio Marti

Cuba Annual Report 1985 is a collection of four quarterly situation reports issued by Radio Marti's Department of Research & Policy that provides key elements of information on domestic and international events that affect Cuba, its government, its people and its role in world affairs. The Report summarizes events in Cuba during 1985 and their possible significance in future trends. The Report presents a conceptual framework within several sectors of analysis of Cuban Affairs–Foreign Policy, Economy, Military Affairs, Political Control, Culture, Sociology and Ideological Control–as well as an Overview, integrating the different sectors from the perspective of the issues that the Cuban government is giving priority to during the quarter covered.

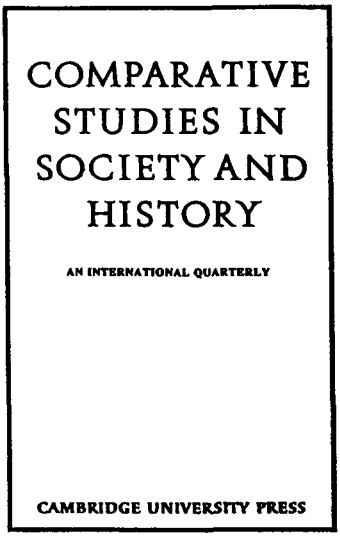
ISBN: 0-88738-146-4 (cloth) 400 pp. **$34.95**

Transaction Publishers *Dept. CU Rutgers-The State University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN SOCIETY AND HISTORY

Cambridge Journals



EDITOR:
Raymond Grew, *University of Michigan*

Comparative Studies in Society and History publishes work by scholars in all disciplines with a particularly strong representation from anthropologists, historians, and sociologists. It is unusual not only in the range of disciplines represented but also in its attention to major issues of theory, as well as to empirical studies reflecting original research into societies of the past and the present and every part of the world. Nearly all the major libraries of the world and most of the important smaller ones specializing in the social sciences subscribe to *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, and this broad readership makes it one of the most frequently cited scholarly quarterlies.

Comparative Studies in Society and History (ISSN 0010–4175) is published quarterly. Subscription to Vol. 30, 1988 (US and Canada only): $62.00 for institutions; $31.00 for individuals; single parts $19.00.

Back Volumes: 21–29 (1979–1987) $71.00 each.

Send orders to:

Journals Department
Cambridge University Press
32 East 57th Street
New York, NY 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CRITICAL REVIEW

☐ **SUBSCRIPTION:**
- ☐ One year (4 issues)—$19 U.S.; $25 foreign
- ☐ Two years (8 issues)—$34 U.S.; $45 foreign
- ☐ Sustaining subscription (one year)—$50, tax deductible
- ☐ Air mail service—add $5/year for faster foreign delivery
- ☐ Libraries: $29 per year; $37 foreign

☐ **ADDRESS CHANGE**

Name _____

Address _____

_____
COUNTRY

☐ Check or money order in U.S. dollars enclosed, payable to CRITICAL REVIEW
☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard # _____ Expires _____

_____
SIGNATURE

532 Broadway, 7th Fl., New York, NY 10012

Institute for Humane Studies

will award prizes totaling

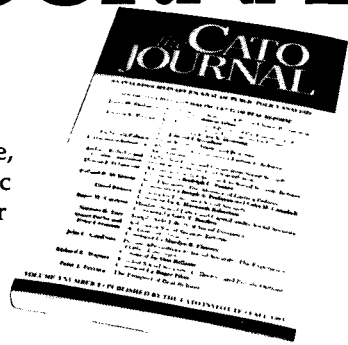
$ 7,500

total prize awards for published editorials, op-eds, columns, essays from a free-market perspective by college-aged writers.
Contact **Institute for Humane Studies - GMU**, Felix Morley Prize, 4400 University Dr., Fairfax, VA 22030 for application.
June 15 deadline.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An Interdisciplinary Journal of Public Policy Analysis

the CATO JOURNAL



The *Cato Journal* is a unique, readable, and timely public policy journal designed for intelligent laypeople as well as scholars and policymakers. It provides well-reasoned analyses of important policy issues by leading scholars and policy analysts. Recent contributors have included James M. Buchanan, Richard Epstein, Alan Walters, James C. Miller III, Mancur Olson, Charles Murray, Antonin Scalia, Allan H. Meltzer, Gottfried Haberler, Jerry L. Jordan, Axel Leijonhufvud, and Aaron Wildavsky.

"Development Economics after 40 Years" was the topic of our Spring/Summer 1987 issue in honor of Peter Bauer. Contributors included Basil S. Yamey, Deepak Lal, Alan Walters, Mancur Olson, Alvin Rabushka, Alan Rufus Waters, Karl Brunner, Julian Simon, Paul Craig Roberts, and Donald N. McCloskey. Bauer's essay, **"The Disregard of Reality,"** is sure to become a classic.

"Government, the Economy, and the Constitution" was the focus of the Fall 1987 issue. Contributors include James Buchanan, Gordon Tullock, Richard Wagner, Dwight Lee, Thomas Dye, Peter Aranson, Robert Bish, Richard Stroup, and Richard Epstein.

"The Financial Services Revolution" is the topic of the Winter 1988 issue, with contributors like George Kaufman, Anna J. Schwartz, Gerald P. O'Driscoll, Jr., William Haraf, Mark Toma, Gillian Garcia, Susan Woodward, Robert Litan, Thomas Huertas, Catherine England, and Robert Eisenbeis.

Single copies of the *Journal* are $7. Full-year subscriptions are $21 for individuals and $35 for libraries. VISA and Mastercard are welcome.

Please enclose payment with your order. Return to:
Cato Institute, Dept. CR, 224 Second St., SE
Washington, DC 20003

CATO INSTITUTE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FORTHCOMING IN

CRITICAL REVIEW

- Locke mythology
- Hobbes's vision
- the "bourgeois" revolution?
- Charles Taylor
- *The Morality of Freedom*
- socialist critique of libertarianism
- liberty vs. equality?
- taking talents seriously
- special issue: Marxism
- special issue: structuralism & post-structuralism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED